

**Can Deliberation Occur?
Student Decision-Making about Controversial Political Issues in
Online, Face-to-Face, and Blended Formats**

by

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of format on the ability of students to reach a collective decision regarding a controversial political issue through the deliberation process. Three deliberation iterations were observed with the three formats including: face-to-face only; online only; and a blended format, containing both an online and face-to-face component. In addition, this case study explored students' critical thinking about the topics, the influence of both the teacher and topic selection on student deliberation, as well as to what extent students are able to reach a collective decision regarding a controversial political issue. Data was collected from the deliberation transcripts, student pre and post-deliberation writing assignments, selected student interviews, teacher journal notes, and a survey given at the conclusion of the study. Results indicate that each format has both its own benefits as well as drawbacks that vary based on the students and curricular need. Several emergent variables influenced the outcomes of this study including the observed class' collective dynamics, students' interest in the topics that were deliberated, and the persistent obstacle of developing a decision-making procedure for the deliberation process.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

In America's government institutions, deliberation finds itself as one of the central activities. The Supreme Court affords allotted times to each of the opposing parties to lay out their arguments, interjected with question-and-answer sessions; the Justices meet following oral arguments to discuss their own opinions and legal analysis. Presidents, exemplified by Bill Clinton and Franklin Roosevelt in the spokes-and-wheel framework of governing, allow their policies to be shaped through the unrestricted deliberations of their Cabinets, which often disagree amongst each other. Before bills can become law, deliberation occurs on Capitol Hill in standing committees, individually in both the House of Representatives and the Senate, and, finally, in conference committees, which combine members of the House and the Senate. Sunday morning political talk shows and cable news networks feature lively deliberation between various proponents and opponents of current policy issues. Locally, citizens attend city council meetings and school board hearings where deliberation ensues on such local, but equally important, matters; these issues may include whether a stop light should be placed at what is perceived to be a dangerous intersection or where to place a new high school. Each of these processes requires preparation, practice, and intellectual effort; thus, deliberation of controversial public issues is a strenuous task, yet rewarding if practiced well. Benjamin Barber (1984), a prominent political scientist, best states the role of these processes in America when he states: "At the heart of a strong democracy is talk" (p. 173).

The direction of public policy decisions that these institutions make often centers on the deliberation enacted by its citizens, not solely on its institutions. Although these citizen deliberations do not necessarily occur in the halls of Capitol Hill, they do generate public

opinion, which serves as both a constraint and influence on politicians' decision making. More importantly, they develop a sense of popular sovereignty amongst the citizenry, which enhances one's political efficacy through the exercise of freedom of speech and engagement with public issues. The livelihood of American democracy depends on its citizens to be able to cognitively process issues facing the country and establish a "common good" for the nation through deliberation, whether that deliberation be verbal, written, or physically exercised at the voting booths (Pace, 2008; Parker; 2003; Newmann, 1973; Engle and Ochoa, 1988; Hess, 2000). Walter Parker (2008) asserts that citizens have a responsibility to process issues collectively, to "recognize, accept, and communicate" with fellow citizens, in order to preserve and secure the rights promised during the founding of the American republic. Parker's vision of the American citizenry is a progressive and optimistic viewpoint that captures the image of a democracy willing to tackle the perplexing problems that it faces through a collective process, yet much of what is known about the American political climate today counters this opinion.

Recently, doubt has increased if Americans are capable of finding common ground on controversial issues facing the nation, such as immigration and gay marriage. Such uncertainty has arisen with events like the division over passage of healthcare reform decision and the stalemate produced by the budget showdown in Congress. Further, recent studies suggest that American citizens are becoming grounded in their political beliefs, yet wishing to avoid challenges to their own ideology; survey research indicates more adults are moving into politically homogeneous communities as well as developing both a dislike and unwillingness to discuss political issues that they see as controversial or conflicting (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2002). While it may be difficult to change what has been engendered in the current adult

citizenry, students in public schools can perhaps be molded into citizens matching Parker's description.

For several decades, civic educators have advocated for the infusion of deliberation in the social studies classroom (Newmann, 1977; Parker, 2008; Hess, 2008; Engle and Ochoa, 1988; Johnson and Johnson). Public schools, with their diverse student bodies and collective nature of the classroom, hold the potential as training grounds for future citizens practicing their discussion of public issues (Hess and Posselt, 2002; Parker, 2008; Singleton and Giese, 1996; Newman, 1975). However, many teachers are opposed to such efforts or, if they do embrace discussion, they fail to effectively lead or engage their students in quality civic discussion (Hess, 2009; Larson, 1997; Onosko, 1991). Despite the proposed potential and identified hesitations, little research has been conducted to investigate deliberation's effectiveness in producing critical reasoning or fostering collective decision-making in a manner amongst secondary students.

Unlike previous opportunities for studying discussion of controversial public issues in secondary social studies classrooms, the opportunity exists to expand where these discussions take place, thus moving the focus away from the physical classroom setting. A study by the Pew Internet and American Life Project found that 93 percent of American teenagers are online, with 51 percent of these teenagers reporting to be online on a daily basis (Blankenship, 2009). With the explosion of Web 2.0 technology and the decrease of the digital divide, the possibility exists for student discussion to occur outside of the classroom simulating what many students do on such websites as Facebook or Twitter. For educators, the dilemma that these new technological innovations pose is how to capture this technology, which many students are already familiar with, and apply it to the learning process in a constructive manner. In addition, rather than automatically viewing technology as a better supplement for face-to-face interaction, the

differing formats must be examined to determine the advantages of each as well as how they complement one another's weaknesses.

In order to ensure that future generations of American citizens are able to partake in actions symbolizing engaged citizenship, social studies teachers must seek to identify and implement pedagogical tools that enhance the civic capability of students. Research should be initiated to further understand how students collectively reason about controversial political issues through the process of deliberation. In addition, efforts should be taken to compare the possibility for developing student deliberation across multiple formats in order to advance teacher's knowledge about how technology may aid civic education.

Research Questions

In exploring the issues discussed previously, I have one fundamental question at the heart of this research study: how does students' group decision-making, when deliberating controversial political issues, differ between face-to-face, online, and blended deliberations? Embedded in this question are several more specific questions that assist me in answering the larger question.

These questions include:

1. To what extent are students capable of reaching a collective decision during deliberation of a controversial political issue?
2. When students are deliberating, what types of critical reasoning are most evident in the three formats?
3. How does the choice of topic influence the student's participation in the deliberation?

Overview of Proposed Study

This research study sought to explore the aforementioned research questions using a case study framework. For the study, three deliberations were implemented and observed in one senior AP US Government course. The analyzed deliberations featured three different controversial political issues as well as took place in three settings: face-to-face; online; and blended, a combination of online and face-to-face discussion. While most reported data is qualitative in nature, some data is translated into quantitative values to provide descriptive statistics. Various data analysis strategies were employed in an effort to provide a descriptive and triangulated response to the aforementioned research questions.

By examining these research questions, I hope to provide a rich description of one teacher in implementing a deliberation model in three variations of format. In doing so, it is intended that insight can be gained regarding how students respond cognitively and socially to these experiences as they sought to arrive at a collective response to the proposed controversial political issue. Finally, this study addresses gaps in the existing literature regarding the collective experience of students in controversial issues discussion, the role of critical reasoning in online and face-to-face discussions in secondary social studies, and tests what is largely a theoretical constructivist model of discussion, the deliberation discussion format.

Definition of Key Terms

While the following terms will be explored in further depth immersed in the context of the literature review, they are defined below to provide the reader a synopsis of the major constructs in this study.

Deliberation. Unlike informal class discussions or Socratic seminars, deliberation is a formal class discussion that focuses on the question of what should be done regarding a public

issue requiring a policy response (Parker, 1999). This type of deliberation differs from casual talk in the classroom in that the individuals who take part should be knowledgeable of the issue they are discussing, which will allow for them to try reaching a responsible conclusion (Wright and Street, 2007). When deliberating, students initially register their own personal preferences, but then work collectively (or cooperatively, rather than competitively) in order to reason, create possible solutions, and weigh alternatives as they seek a common decision (Parker, 2003; Wright and Street, 2007).

Online Deliberation. To define this issue, I have chosen to adopt a generic definition while utilizing several conditions to further clarify my definition. Journell (2008) defines online deliberation as an asynchronous “exchange of messages in a medium that does not require simultaneous presence of the sender and receiver” (p. 321). Defining online deliberation in more technological terms, Lee (2008) bases his definition around the explanation of Web 2.0 products as “dynamic Web-based resources which enable the construction and publication of text, audio, and video products within social networks” (p. 42). Thus, when combined, a working definition of online deliberation is the asynchronous use of dynamic Web-based resources allowing for messages to be constructed, sent, and received by multiple individuals in a collected location. When combined with the definition of deliberation, mentioned previously, online deliberation is the collective addressing of public issues by citizens in an environment that does not require them to meet to meet together in person or at the same time.

Controversial Political Issue As opposed to the more generalized term of controversial public issue put forth by Oliver and Shaver (1966), the term “controversial political issue” seeks to narrow the type of problem to one that confronts a voter or the government regarding a current or perennial issue. This type of problem is one that surrounds a public, or shared, problem that

has multiple legitimate answers or approaches to in solving. Hess (2009) asserts that the use of “political” in the term emphasizes the democratic nature of the problem and the role of the citizen in helping direct or design governmental policy.

Critical Reasoning What is often considered a collection of cognitive strategies, critical reasoning is the set of skills used to judge a presented issue or design a solution to a posed problem. The strategies include: the ability of a student to construct their own opinion from the presented evidence; supporting one’s opinion with relevant evidence; providing evidence-backed alternative theories or approaches; generating evidence to provide a rebuttal to other alternatives; and developing an epistemological stance designed to weigh and evaluate the provided evidence (Guiller, et al., 2008).

Possible Limitations

This study utilized qualitative data gathering, which therefore limits itself to the interpretation of the researcher. The data is individualistic to the students within the observed class as it reflects the class dynamics, the students’ intellectual capabilities, and the teacher’s ability to implement a designed curriculum. Thus, the findings from this study are difficult to generalize to other classrooms or students. Yet, efforts are made to make the study replicable by including the curriculum materials used in the study along with the provision of a detailed account of the study’s implementation, including the structure of the lessons and units in which the discussions are to be held.

Another potential limitation of this study is its limited sample size as it focuses on a single case, or one class. While this prevents the researcher from understanding how other classes might experience deliberation with another teacher or when focusing on other

controversial issues, the narrowing of focus provides the opportunity to shed more insight and provide deeper reflection on the experience of one class throughout a series of iterations. In addition, this study does not seek to generate findings that can be generalized, thus probability sampling is not necessary to address the research purpose.

CHAPTER TWO: A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The History of Controversial Political Issues in the Classroom

Since the early 1900s, educators have been seeking the infusion of controversial political issues into the social studies classroom. Many of these attempts were designed to challenge images of static curriculum that reinforced existing social castes and emphasized content memorization as opposed to student engagement. John Dewey, in the beginning of the twentieth century, recognized schools as an important location where students could be developed into future citizens. Democracy, in Dewey's eyes, consisted of a shared experience amongst peoples of different backgrounds and demographics. He saw the potential and need of social interaction for learning and solving shared concerns as opposed to a curriculum in which barriers are established to limit shared discussion. (Dewey, 1916) Dewey's vision laid the groundwork for the emergence of a problem-based curriculum in the beginning of the twentieth century that included new courses and curriculum designs including the Community Civics and Problems of Democracy (POD) design that was initiated by the National Education Association 1916 committee (Thornton, 2008).

Following Dewey and in the face of the Great Depression with the accompanying rise of tyranny and fascism, Harold Rugg recognized that the existing social studies curriculum focused too much on learning intricacies of the social sciences and lacked developing the ability of students to actively confront current problems. Rugg saw the need for a revised curriculum in which the social sciences were interwoven together to help students understand current problems and complex institutional relationships. He felt that the inclusion of contemporary issues into the social studies curriculum would help develop future citizens prepared to solve what he labeled

the “American Problem,” the perennial issues that challenged America’s claim as a moral democracy (Rugg, 1939; Rugg, 1996). Yet, Rugg’s ideas became subservient to other educational causes in the wake of World War II and the Cold War as the social studies curriculum moved towards the goals of promoting national pride and seeking conformity (Thornton, 2008; Urban & Wagoner, 2008).

The reemergence of the problem-centered curriculum began in the mid-1950s as American society began once again to deal with various societal ills, namely racism and segregation. This time period has been called by one of the prominent leaders of today in controversial issue discussion as the “golden age” of controversial political issue curriculum design (Parker, 1999). Hunt and Metcalf (1955) sought for the inclusion in the curriculum of what they labeled as “closed topics,” or issues; they argued that students who learn to reason amongst each other about shared concerns could then reason internally about private concerns. Shirley Engle (1960) made the explicit call for teachers to provide more decision-making opportunities for students in the curriculum. He believed the ideal citizen did not necessitate a mastery of the social science, but rather needed to be capable of reaching quality decisions in both private and public matters.

One of the more prominent efforts during this “golden age” of problem-based social studies was the work produced by three key individuals. Harvard University’s Social Studies Project, designed largely by Donald Oliver, James Shaver, and Fred Newmann, introduced the jurisprudential framework to teaching controversial political issues inside the classroom. They brought further distinction to the issues that were being discussed in the classroom by breaking them into sub-issues: definitional; empirical; and ethical. They also sought to establish means to move beyond what had been exploratory discussions towards possible resolution. Their

curriculum design asked that students clarify issues, stipulate claims, and draw analogies. (Parker, 1999; Oliver & Shaver, 1966). Newmann further expanded on his work at Harvard by advocating for deliberation within the classrooms to teach students how to exert influence in the public arena; Newmann saw discussion in the classroom as a means of enhancing the likelihood for citizen action in policymaking (Newmann, 1975). These individuals helped create the momentum behind the New Social Studies era that lasted well into the 1970s. This period saw a promulgation of issues-centered curriculums as teacher-educators argued for curriculum allowing students to formulate their own evidence-based conclusions. (Evans, 2004)

Beginning in the 1980s following the election of Reagan, a conservative backlash against the issues-centered curriculum was initiated. A large push against the New Social Studies stemmed from the publication of *Nation at Risk* and the quest to make education more uniform in nature with the development of standards and common assessments. Conservative educators, such as Diane Ravitch and E.D. Hirsch, called for less open-ended curriculum and a more concentrated focus on history, in a manner that was less open for interpretation (Evans, 2004). The concentrated focus on content mastery was embodied in the passage of No Child Left Behind by the George W. Bush administration. This policy-based culmination of the standards movement and rebuttal of issues-centered instruction was not without critics however. Ravitch, once a prominent leader in the movement, has been recently outspoken against what she now perceives as the development of education into a business-like model (Ravitch, 2010). This model seeks to create a mechanized learning experience that is identical for all students despite variances in academic ability, culture, and interest. Other critics of the current state of education perceive the standards-based movement as a means of packing the curriculum with information, which then allows for little time for deep, reflective exploration of knowledge; it also diminishes

skills into a more mechanistic aspect of curriculum as opposed to a transformative element of civic enhancement (Thornton, 2008; Rossi, 1995).

Despite the continued focus on traditional curriculum and assessment as embodied in No Child Left Behind, issues-centered curriculum is currently being pursued by a variety of organizations. Efforts by the National Council for the Social Studies, as seen in the publication of the Handbook on Teaching Social Issues, and more individual efforts by an assortment of social studies teacher educators are promoting the deliberation of controversial political issues through a variety of nation-wide programs including the *Choices* curriculum, developed by Brown University, and *The Exchange*, an outreach program of the Constitution Center (*The Exchange: A Marketplace of Student Ideas; The Choices Program*). One of the more recent changes in the teaching of controversial issues has been the emergence of technology to support inquiry-based practices (Swan & Hofer, 2008).

In conjunction with the efforts to introduce issues-centered curriculums in the social studies was the focus on problem-based learning. Problem-based learning differs from the more traditional pedagogy of lecture and use of the textbook that one associates with the transmission of knowledge, which Hirsch and Ravitch have advocated for in the past. Rossi (1991) outlines four central components of problem-based learning:

1. The use of knowledge that is substantial, multifaceted, and divergent using sources beyond the textbook
2. Explores questions or issues that are essential, perennial, or authentic
3. Teachers construct a spirit of inquiry by providing opportunities for student support as well as assessment mechanisms that allow students to manipulate ideas to transform their meaning

4. Provision of considerable time to concentrate on curriculum units

High quality problem-based learning could entail a variety of tools and teaching approaches in the classroom. Some common lesson approaches include the use of simulations, service-learning, argumentative writing, document analysis, role-playing, and discussion (Kahne & Middaugh, 2010; Rossi, 1995; Newmann, 1991).

Deliberation as a Societal and Pedagogical Tool

One of the many instruments within the teacher's toolbox of learning tools is the form of discussion called deliberation. As a pedagogical term in social studies education, deliberation is best summarized as a discussion method with the goal of collective decision-making amongst students. Deliberation goes beyond the traditional teacher-posed question in which one student responds and the teacher then evaluates what was said. Rather, deliberation asks that students carry the weight of the discussion through multiple interchanges without teacher involvement, signaling that the conversation is both substantive and sustaining (Newmann, et al., 2007). It differs from other types of class discussion, such as seminars that help to enlighten students about the meaning of content, as it asks students to learn more as well as to do more as they seek to construct a collective response to a shared public issue. In addition, unlike simulations or town hall discussion formats, deliberations allow students to represent their own opinions and constructed knowledge rather than embody an assigned perspective. (Hess, 2009; Parker 2008) When asking students to deliberate, teachers pose a problem-question in which the problem is perceived as a public issue or concern, thus involving more than one perspective differing from an intrapersonal or private problem (Oliver & Shaver, 1966). This problem requires the construction of a policy, which has the potential to serve as the solution to the shared problem.

The deliberation process can be summarized as a discussion with a potential eight steps that can be reached (Parker, 1999). In Parker's theory, there are eight steps in the expert model and three levels or steps in the citizen model. These phases and steps are summarized and synthesized in Table 1 with accompanying stage and level name, the goals of each step, and a description of what a student might do during that step (see Table 1). Through these eight steps, students are able to collectively construct, test, and establish an implementation plan for a solution to what is perceived as the public problem.

Table 1: The Structure of Deliberation (Citizen and Expert Model)

Steps in Policy Deliberation	Goal of Step	Example of Student Input
Citizen Model Phase 1: Identifying and Understanding Public Problems (Expert Model Steps 1-3)		
Step 1: Problem Identification and Diagnosis	Identification and description of a gap between a social system’s actual and desired level of performance	Students identify values supported by each side
Step 2: Mapping of Stakeholders	Determining who has a venture in the problem or its resolution	Students identify who has the authority to make change
Step 3: Formulating Policy Goals and Criteria for Evaluating Options	Creating goal or objectives to reach in their final decision	Students identify what value they hope will be ensured for society
Citizen Model Phase 2: Developing and Analyzing Policy Options Together (Expert Model Steps 4-5)		
Step 4: Developing Policy Options	Design policy alternatives, and come combinations thereof, to meet goals established	Students propose a new method of achieving a goal
Step 5: Assessing Consequences of Policy Options	Evaluate proposed alternatives against the criteria or goals established using inquiry	Students identify resource limitations of one option

Citizen Model Phase 3: Making Policy Decisions Together(Expert Model Steps 6-8)

Step 6: Selection

An alternative is selected for adoption

Students use the benefits of a solution to
counter

Step 7: Political Analysis

Examining the political feasibility of the
adopted alternative to modify if needed

Students weigh how their decision will be
accepted by stakeholders

Step 8: Implementation Analysis

Designing an action plan for implementing
policy

Students identify budget resources to help
fund policy

Note. Adopted from “Toward an Aristocracy of Everyone: Policy Study in the High School Curriculum,” by Walter C. Parker and William Zumeta, 1999, *Theory and Research in Social Education*, 27 (1), p. 9-44.

Parker's model, while largely reflecting and incorporating work in the political science field, does somewhat mirror a more historical model that originated in the New Social Studies movement. In 1988, Engle and Ochoa proposed a simpler model of decision-making for students to utilize or follow in issues-based curriculum. This model was largely a culmination of Engle's work dating back to the 1960s that argued school classrooms should be miniature communities where students work collaboratively to solve shared problems. Their process involved seven phases that were not necessarily designed to all occur within one lesson or one day, but rather over the span of a curriculum unit. The seven phases in sequential order include:

1. Orientation to a problem area
2. Identification and definition of the problem
3. Engagement by use of probing questions
4. Construction of value assumptions
5. Identify courses of action and their predictable consequences
6. Reaching and justifying a decision
7. Proclamation of decision and reflection upon the process

Thus, Parker's model largely echoes their emphasis on cooperative learning and investigation skills that are emphasized in the seven phases. Yet, Parker's model focuses on the verbal ability of students to conduct such an investigation, as opposed to what could be implemented as a multi-lesson unit and teaching approach. (Allen, 1996; Engle, 1960; Engle & Ochoa, 1988)

Deliberation stands apart from other forms of discussion as it includes elements of moral reasoning that guide students towards an agreed upon solution. Political theory believes that deliberation must be directed by a sense of morals and values, thus indicating that there is a

correct solution to embrace; yet, this policy may require choosing between two equally important democratic values. While masquerading as deliberation, many people who state they participate in deliberative activities actually do not due to their own interests and biases. One such group is the sophists who rely on well-crafted arguments to promote their own viewpoints. Another group is the traditionalists who rely on such themes as order, tradition, and authority to subordinate reason as well as listening to alternative means of addressing current issues. (Guttman, 1987) In addition, deliberation is philosophically different from negotiation between two opposing groups on a political issue. Negotiation involves the consideration of gains and losses with each group looking to create the best outcome for their side. Deliberation requires each side to set aside their perspectives and identify what is believed to be in the common interests of all affected. (Parker, 2002; Guttman & Thompson, 2004)

In terms of what to discuss during deliberations, much of the current framework has been narrowed by Diana Hess's latest research. The problems, or controversial political issues as Hess labels them, that deliberations center around are multi-dimensional in that they have numerous means of solving or can incorporate multiple perspectives when analyzing (Hess, 2008). Rather than use the more traditional term "controversial public issues," Hess changes the term to "controversial political issues" to stress the need to focus on a government-constructed response or solution to the problem, as opposed to other alternative resolutions achieved by other means such as citizen action. These discussions are not merely based around an ill-defined issue or current event as this would lead to broad and unfocused banter in discussing the issues while current events may lack controversy or multiple interpretations. In addition, controversial political issues do not concern themselves directly with questions of constitutionality, yet the Constitution can be invoked in the discussion, as questions of constitutionality are concerned

with “can” or “must;” however, in a controversial political issue, one may know that the constitution grants states the ability to execute prisoners, but the question is ethical because it focuses on “should.” Controversial political issues can be both perennial issues and case studies; yet, choosing a case study often allows a more focused discussion, while insight is still gained into the related perennial issue. Private issues are not considered controversial political issues, while they do sometimes lend themselves to political topics; for example, the private issue of “should I report a crime?” is a private decision, but the class could deliberate the question of “Should it be a crime to not report illegal activities?” (Hess, 2008) However, simply because a topic is considered a controversial political issue, does not mean it should be discussed. Topics should be weighed using the criteria of: potential student interest; authentic problems as opposed to hypothetical scenarios; evidence of a value conflict; and revelation of the pluralistic nature of America (Parker, 1999; Hess, 2000).

While Hess’ definition lends itself well to questions of policy, controversial political questions may revolve around other matters beyond policy. Controversial political issues can fall under three different categories: (1) structural political issues, such as term limits and use of the filibuster; (2) current issues, such as reducing gang violence or eliminating the estate tax; and (3) candidate characteristics, such as considering models of leadership (Hess, 2000). While these models do not all fit perfectly into the model of discussion as established by Parker (see Table 1), they do fit the basic criteria in that the students are assessing a controversial question that involves multiple perspectives with competing interpretations in order to arrive at a shared understanding. Yet, these types of issues do mark a departure from the original definitions of controversial public issues as they do not seek to judge a historical issue, but rather focus on contemporary problems (Oliver & Shaver, 1966).

Deliberation for the Enhancement of Democracy

For some teachers, deliberation is merely a means to achieving a larger content goal in the classroom, yet others perceive it as an end or goal in and of itself. The ability to engage in principled reasoning is recognized as a characteristic of positive political engagement. To engage with others, in the form of understanding and communicating, for the purpose of reconciling disagreements enhances the concept of popular sovereignty as students learn to self-govern while discovering their own voice (Dahl, 1998; Guttman, 1987). Democracies that lack active political dialogue amongst its citizenry are often minimal in their progressive nature. Their citizens engage only in voting and discussion is limited to “rights talk,” or the focus on issues of an individual’s concern rather than the common good or solution of shared problems. (Parker, 1999) Thus, for teachers who envision democracy as more than representative government, using deliberation in the classroom is training students to become competent participants in their society beyond school (Hess, 2008). Evidence suggests that students exposed to deliberation are more prone to voting and other forms of civic engagement (Hess, 2000).

Public schools host a diverse range of students, which in many facets creates a microcosm of modern society, thus ensuring multiple perspectives are available to create complexity in a class deliberation. This diversity, contained within the school, leads to problems within the school that often require decision-making, similar to the requirements of a citizen. (Parker, 2010) And, of the various classes in public schools, social studies classes are the most appropriate atmosphere to conduct deliberations due to the nature of the curriculum that examines the history of society and the individual (Engle & Ochoa, 1999; Rossi, 2006).

Deliberation for the Development of Political Skills

In conjunction with the development of a stronger democracy, educators, philosophers, and political scientists see schools as ideal laboratories to develop deliberation skills for future citizens. Schools also allow students the time and reinforcement to develop necessary deliberation skills, such as clarifying statements and appreciating multiple perspectives, before they are asked to engage in deliberative activities as full citizens (Brice, 2002). These skills can be broken into various groupings, but are easily understood in relation to procedural and critical reasoning. Procedural skills emphasize the ability of students to engage with others in a civil manner, while critical reasoning relates to the students' ability to engage and understand the issue. (Harris, 1996; Harris, 2002) Developed by those advocating for the establishment of controversial public issues discussion in secondary classrooms, there exists a common set of procedural and critical reasoning skills (see Table 2). The teaching of these skills prepare students to engage in proactive citizenship activities as they grow older, such as arguing for a stoplight before a city council hearing. Yet, participation in deliberation must be offered at multiple points throughout a course with reinforcement-type feedback from the teacher that helps sharpen the aforementioned skills.

Table 2: Commonly Identified Skills in Deliberation

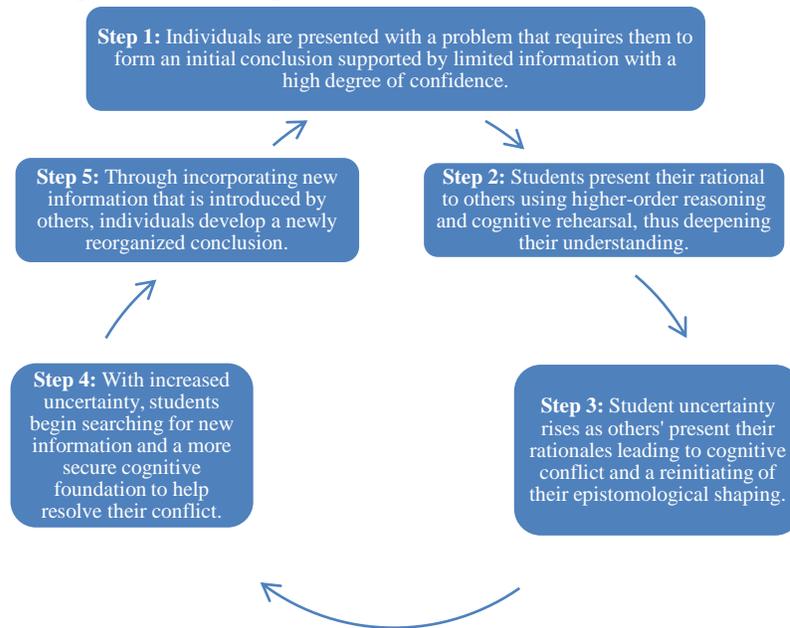
Critical reasoning	Procedural Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using evidence to support a statement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active listening
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarizing the discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respectfully disagreeing with others
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using a probing question to elicit more information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using others' names in recognition of their contributions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenging the relevancy or accuracy of a statement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inviting contributions from others
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing an appropriate analogy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making a stipulation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stating and identifying definitional, ethical, and factual issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making a concession
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizing values or value conflict 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowing others to contribute as opposed to monopolizing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing a clear transition from one subject to another 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking a clarifying question
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizing a contradiction in someone's opinion or contribution 	

Note. Adopted from “How High School Students Experience and Learn from the Discussion of Controversial Public Issues,” by D. Hess and J. Posselt, 2002, *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, 17(4), p. 283-314. *Teaching Public Issues in the High School* by D. Oliver and J. Shaver, 1966, Houghton Mifflin Company. “Classroom Assessment of Civic Discourse,” D. Harris, 2002, in W. Parker’s *Education for Democracy: Contexts, Curricula, Assessments*, Information Age Publishing.

Deliberation for Developing Student Thinking

In addition to enhancing American democracy, learning theory, especially adherents to constructivist learning, supports deliberation as a pedagogical tool (Journell, 2008). Deliberations incorporate three key components of constructivist theory: social interaction; exploration of information; and negotiation of epistemological conclusions (Doolittle and Hicks, 2003). In deliberations, gained knowledge results from the social construction of that knowledge based on the exposure through listening to primary and secondary discourses; it unites the cognitive and social elements of the classroom (Parker, 2008; Larson & Keiper, 2002). Learning occurs as a result of collaboration with others due to the challenging of personally-held ideas and beliefs, exploration of new concepts, and the interaction of multiple individuals' self-gained knowledge; what is learned is based on how individuals make interconnections between others' contributions (Bloome & Bailey, 1992; Hess, 2008; Parker, 2008; Vygotsky, 1978). Deliberation not only contributes to the learning of content but also helps refine critical and moral reasoning, qualities that educators support (Oliver & Shaver, 1966; Parker 2008; Kohlberg, 1981). While many different theories support learning through discussion, Johnson and Johnson (2009) explicitly summarize student learning during deliberations, as opposed to discussions, into a five-step process that represents the learning process of deliberation as opposed to that during negotiation or debate (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: 5-Step Learning Process during Deliberation



Note. From “Energizing Learning: The Instructional Power of Conflict,” by D. Johnson and R. Johnson, 2009, *Educational Researcher*, 38 (1), p. 37-51.

Yet, while deliberation is heralded as a positive contribution to democracy and is supported by learning theories, its presence is lacking in schools. In many classrooms, the presence of controversial political issues is largely absent (Hahn, 1999; Phillips, 1997). Some teachers claim they allow discussion of controversial political issues in the classroom yet evidence reveals that these classes do not move beyond superficial talk of current events (Hess, 2008). Onosko (1991) attempted to answer the question of why there is such a lack of discussions when he conducted a survey of 16 social studies departments, 54 teachers in total, to try to identify what limited teachers from implementing higher-order activities in their classrooms, such as discussions. He discovered that amongst the reasons were notably the pressures of knowledge transmission to prepare for standards-based assessments, a tendency to teach topics in a broad coverage fashion, and a perceived lack of class time.

Differences Between Online and Face-to-Face Deliberation

With the advent of Internet technology during the 1990s, deliberations have been able to move online beyond the limitations of face-to-face interaction. Web 2.0 technology has allowed people to converse across geographic boundaries and at different points in time. Adults often partake in deliberation of controversial political issues online in such settings as the Arena on Politico.com and similar forums on other news sites. For students, their engagement and use of Web 2.0 technology has increased through their interconnectedness with such software as Facebook and Twitter. This technology has become increasingly common in college courses, where online discussion is the second most used form of online learning after email (Penny & Murphy, 2009). Some credit online discussion as an advanced form of democratic living, teledemocracy, which allows citizens in large democracies to have greater access to information through technology and increased communication with each other; these connections possess the potential possibly increase civic participation as it allows for unmediated communication across time and geographical boundaries (Larson & Keiper, 2002; Wright & Street, 2007) .

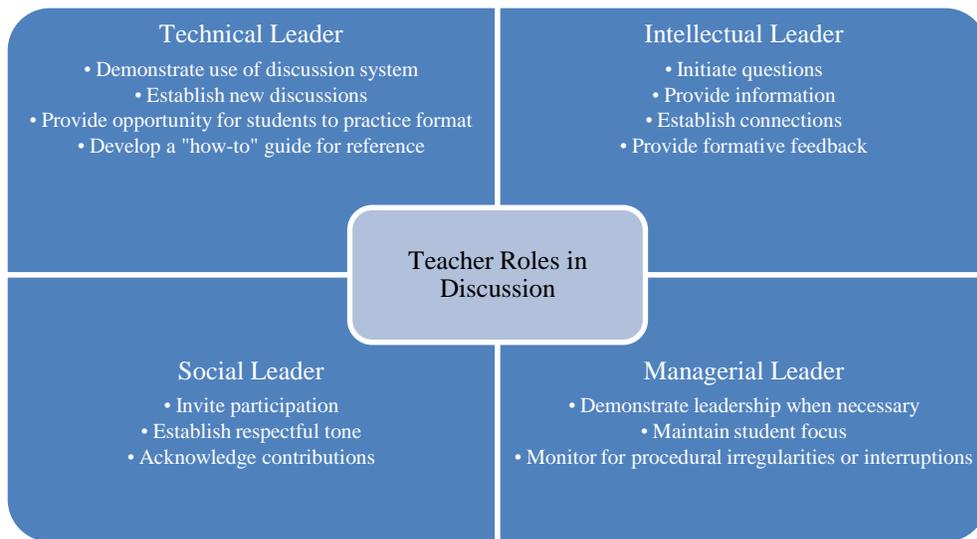
With the emergence of online discussion, the question arises as to whether this format has certain advantages or weaknesses in comparison to the traditional face-to-face discussion format. The answer to this question can help determine when it is appropriate to use one format or another as well as whether it is appropriate to consider a combination of formats. Yet, to state unequivocally that one format is better than the other is an unreasonable claim to make. In comparing varying formats, changes in implementation must occur and thus one cannot seek to examine each format with the same lense for the sake of declaring judgment against one or for the other (Warnick & Burbules, 2007). In addition, teachers seek different formats to reach different ends, thus face-to-face deliberation may be intended to address certain needs while

online discussion addresses others in respect to their advantages (Larson, 1997). Based on previous comparison studies of online and face-to-face discussion, five major categories of differences emerge: role of the teacher; assessment; student emotional responses; student critical reasoning; and structure of discussion.

Role of the Teacher in Online and Face-to-Face Deliberation

Successful discussion of controversial political issues begins with the teacher (Hess, 2008). In issues-based teaching, the preliminary role of the teacher is choosing what topics and questions to pose to the class for exploration and deliberation (Engle & Ochoa, 1988; Hess, 2008). Thus, the teacher serves as the curriculum gatekeeper. The teacher also largely serves as a manager during the discussions as they control the flow, focus, and class atmosphere during the discussion of controversial public issues. Teachers serve as the support for successful discussions through the varying roles they play during a discussion: social; intellectual; managerial; and technical leader (Wang, 2008). These roles are compared in Figure 2. While these responsibilities of the teacher remain true for every discussion, online and face-to-face discussions do produce differences in how teachers guide and facilitate discussions.

Figure 2: Roles of the Teacher in Discussion Facilitation



Note. From Wang, Q. (2008). Student-facilitators' Roles in Moderating Online Discussions. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 39 (5), 859-874.

Roles such as the social and intellectual leader are frequently seen in online and face-to-face discussions, yet online discussions necessitate that the teacher gives heightened focus to the role of technical leader due to the infusion of technology. Several studies have focused on the role of the teacher as a technological leader in designing online discussions. Gilbert and Dabbagh (2005) sought to understand what measures a teacher could impose on an online discussion that would facilitate greater student critical reasoning as well as participation. In their findings, they found that a teacher must be cautious to not overimpose control of discussions. When they asked students to adhere to requests for citing their evidence used in the discussion as well as limiting the amount one could post, student interaction with one another declined in addition to a reporting by students of less interest in the topic. However, when the teacher provided a criteria-based rubric to assess student contributions as well as established a timeline for posting, student interaction and critical reasoning increased.

The role of the teacher in facilitating online discussions is diminished in comparison to the teacher facilitating face-to-face discussions. The absence of a persistent authority figure online detracts from the ability of the teacher to effectively serve as an intellectual and managerial facilitator. Larson and Keiper (2002) sought to explore how online and face-to-face discussions differed in a course of pre-service teachers, who were asked to discuss controversies in social studies teaching. They often encountered students who failed to interact with another or, when interaction did occur, failed to address matters of substance. When the researchers posed corrective questions or a question meant for students to react to one another, they found that students often did not respond to their interjections. Yet, in their classroom discussions, they noted that students would immediately react to the prompt or question provided by a teacher during a discussion.

As emphasized previously, teacher guidance in a discussion is a critical factor in student success. In a study of online discussions regarding controversial historical issues, Journell (2008) sought to understand student capability to historically reason about controversial issues. However, Journell's findings were hampered by teacher errors in leading class discussions. In his study, the teacher's failure to provide a model or rubric of expectations, respond in a timely manner to student questions directed towards him, establish learning connections, and provide ample resources to support discussion about complex issues led to an absence of historical thinking by the students. Thus, the results of students are intimately connected to the leadership of the teacher in facilitating discussions.

In many comparison studies, little attention is given to the behavior or actions of the teacher that lead to constructive gains in learning or positive experiences reported by the students. For instance, Merryfield (2000) asserts that her students felt more open in discussing

controversial issues, such as race, online in comparison to face-to-face; yet, Merryfield gives no attention to her instructional decisions that led to this finding. In another study of the learning outcomes of face-to-face and online discussion, Ocker and Yaverbaum (1999) find that learning outcomes were equal amongst the formats but provide no insight as to whether the instructor helped facilitate the discussion or what type of learning activities preceded the discussion to provide students with the information to participate in the discussion. Thus, while researchers are reporting differences and similarities between the two formats, few studies are giving guidance as to what decisions teachers made or did not make to produce these results.

Assessment of Deliberation Between Online and Face-to-Face Formats

One of the teacher responsibilities as part of exemplary practice in facilitating discussions is ensuring that students model the criteria set forth. In order to ensure this, teachers need to assess and provide feedback to students to reinforce the criteria that is being sought. Yet, for some, assessing discussions and providing a grade to students may be inauthentic as discussion is an operation that must occur freely in a democracy, without any form of extrinsic motivation (Hess, 2008; Newmann, 1988).

Despite the hesitations by some, others advocate for the assessing of discussion in the classroom. Assessment experts in issues-based learning argue that assessment is needed to reinforce and reflect the curriculum and instruction of the classroom, as opposed to that of district or state goals (Miller & Singleton, 1997; Stiggins, 1997; Rossi, 1995). To maintain a sense of authenticity in the classroom, Newmann (1988) believes one must assess goals that go beyond the classroom and are valued in adult life, such as respectful disagreement. Harris (1998) argues that discussion of controversial issues needs to be assessed in order to reinforce the skills

that a teacher asks students to display during the process. In his promotion of assessment, Harris developed a rubric that guides teachers and students towards a performance-based participation in discussion (see Table 3). This rubric reflects the culmination of skills that proponents of discussion in the classroom, such as Newmann, Oliver, and Shaver, have identified as significant learning goals for students.

Table 3: Harris Rubric for Discussions of Controversial Public Issues

Substantive Performance Criteria	Procedural Performance Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stating and identifying ethical, definitional, and factual issues • Using disciplinary knowledge • Elaborating statements with explanations, reasons, or evidence • Stipulating claims or definitions • Recognizing values or value conflicts • Arguing by analogy 	<p>Positive (Good behavior):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledging the statements of others • Respectively challenging the accuracy, logic, relevance, or clarity of statements • Summarizing points of agreement and disagreement <p>Negative (Bad behavior):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irrelevant or distracting statements • Obstructive interruption • Monopolizing • Personal attack
<p>The MAJOR goal in grading is the extents to which the student’s contributions to the deliberation clarifies the policy issue being considered and helps the group make progress towards a resolution. Three elements are considered when assessing a student’s participation: 1) presented accurate knowledge related to the policy issue; 2) employed skills for stating and pursuing related issues; and 3) engaged others in constructive dialogue. Contributions will receive one of these five scores:</p>	

UNSATISFACTORY (1): The student has failed to express any relevant foundational knowledge and has neither stated nor elaborated on any issues.

MINIMAL (2): The student has stated a relevant factual, ethical, or definitional issue as a question or has accurately expressed relevant foundational knowledge pertaining to an issue raised.

ADEQUATE (3): The student has accurately expressed relevant foundational knowledge pertaining to an issue raised during the deliberation and has pursued an issue by making a statement with an explanation, reasons, or evidence.

EFFECTIVE (4) : The student has accurately expressed relevant foundational knowledge pertaining to an issue raised during the deliberation, pursued an issue with AT LEAST one elaborated statement and, in a civil manner, has built upon a statement made by someone else or thoughtfully challenged its accuracy, clarity, relevance, or logic.

EXEMPLARY (5): The student has accurately expressed relevant foundational knowledge pertaining to an issue raised during the deliberation, pursued an issue with an elaborated statement, and has used stipulation, valuing, or analogy to advance the deliberation. In addition, the student has engaged others in the deliberation by inviting their comments or acknowledging their contributions. Further, the student has built upon a statement made by someone else or thoughtfully challenged its accuracy, clarity, relevance, or logic.

Note: From “Classroom Assessment of Civic Discourse,” by D.E. Harris, 2002, In W. C. Parker (Ed.), *Education for Democracy: Contexts, Curricula, Assessments*, pp. 211-232. Copyright 2002 by Information Age Publishing.

While Harris emphasizes displays of skills in discussion, the question of how much participation should a student display is not answered by his work. Palmer, Holt, and Bray (2008) sought to include a participation element to their grading structure after noticing a lack of interaction in their online discussions. They hypothesized that if they required students to post by certain dates, as opposed to all of the students posting towards the end of the scheduled discussion, they would see greater interaction, which is often lacking online. By including dates by which students must post an initial contribution as well as a minimum number of posts needed by each student, they found increased interaction amongst students. They also indicated that students who posted beyond the required participation amounts scored higher in the class, yet this finding is largely unsubstantiated in that other factors are not controlled for. Tu and Corry (2003), in their survey of existing literature on online discussions, question whether requiring increased participation raises students learning as several studies they examined did not find such results.

Other differences in assessment also exist for teachers who are trying to assess online and face-to-face discussions. One such variance is the ability of teachers to provide formative assessment in the format of immediate feedback and clarification in face-to-face deliberations (Cazden, 1988). In comparison, the writing nature of online discussions often sees teachers incorporate assessment of writing mechanics, such as spelling and grammar (Penny and Murphy, 2009).

Other components of assessment can be incorporated into deliberations on controversial political issues. For example, Engle and Ochoa's controversial issues decision-making process calls for the class to reflect on the process following the culmination of the activity in order to understand what they learned as well as how they can improve their decision-making process

(Allen, 1996). Thus, following deliberations, the class can reflect collectively on the process and what they perceive as the learning outcomes. Other aspects of assessment can also be utilized such as self-assessment for growth in critical reasoning or the extent to which one participated.

Similar to the role of the teacher in facilitating discussions in the two formats, little research beyond theoretical foundations have explored the place of assessment in online and face-to-face deliberations. This lack of research and evidence prevents teachers from understanding how assessment motivates student performance between these formats as well as how assessment promoted increased performance over time. In addition, it raises questions about assessment structure as to whether the same model could be applied to both formats or if different criteria should be applied to each format respectively.

Student Emotional Responses to Online and Face-to-Face Deliberations

Like other classroom pedagogical tools, students have preferences for discussion formats based on their perceived emotional responses to each. In terms of comparison, a substantial number of studies have been conducted that explore student preferences between the two formats. These emotions are important to take into account due to the emphasis on a positive classroom climate for enhancing discussions of controversial public issues (Hess, 2008; Parker 2003).

Merryfield (2000) explored the possibility of whether using an online discussion forum would allow her diverse graduate student course more ability to be open about such topics as race. She used the discussion forum to allow students the ability to discuss topics explored during the class. While lacking a method or instruments to establish her findings, Merryfield's reflection emphasized what she felt was the equality of students in online discussions. She

asserts that all students feel equal online in that they are not judged for their identity, thus they are more likely to assert their “voice” or opinion. Yet, in her study, Merryfield relied on her own perceptions, not those of the students themselves.

In another study focusing on an education graduate course, Marson and Berson (2000) examined the responses of students to the use of an online discussion forum as part of the course. Like Merryfield, they did not seek to compare the two formats, but rather wished to analyze student perceptions of online technology as it was just emerging in educational use at the time. In their findings, students reported a sense of frustration with online forums as they did not have a complete understanding of the technology or encountered various technological issues as they participated throughout the course. Yet, students did indicate a greater sense of enjoyment about content in the curriculum that was discussed online in conjunction with instruction in the classroom. From this study, it is crucial to note that the technological element may have the potential to discourage students if they sense difficulty with using the format. Thus, perhaps face-to-face deliberation may have an advantage in that it has a more natural feel to students. Yet, with such technology as Facebook and Twitter, it may be unrealistic to encounter a student who has not used Web 2.0 software.

Several different studies have focused more intensely on the perceived differences and preferences students see between the two formats. In one study, students reported perceived differences in the purposes of the two formats. These students saw face-to-face discussion as valuable if they were given the opportunity to analyze one another’s opinions and experiences in relation to the topic. Online discussion was seen as valuable for the purpose of evaluating others’ ideas and the ability to challenge existing thought. Therefore, students favored the opportunity to meet collectively and learn from one another’s experiences as opposed to an online environment;

they found that face-to-face discussion provided a richer experience. However, online discussion allowed these students the time to reflect and revisit what had been said by others without the social pressure of having to immediately reply to an individual in face-to-face dialogue. Yet, in this study, Ellis, Goodyear, Prosser, and O'Hara (2006) found that students' perceptions of values in these formats did not match those of the instructor who hosted these discussions in their course. Students did not understand the purpose or benefits of the discussions as intended by the instructors, such as to develop further insight towards an issue; rather, the students saw it as more of a debate experience. Thus, the researchers concluded that students' understanding of educational value in discussions was often not aligned with that of the instructor as well as students failed to see the larger purpose in discussing controversial public issues.

Meyer (2006) implemented a series of discussions over the span of two courses comparing student perceptions and emotional responses to each discussion. In one course, she implemented a set of online discussions as well as a set of face-to-face discussions; she then reversed the formats for the second course. The students reported on their perceptions of the topics and discussion formats using a Likert scale. In what emerged as the three most controversial topics explored during the course as reported by the participants, the students reported that they felt most comfortable discussing these issues online as compared to the other discussions; students that explored these issues face-to-face reported that they felt a greater sense of discomfort when talking about them in class. Students also reported that they felt much more willing to disagree with one another online in comparison to in class.

Meyer's findings reflect similar reports by other studies: students feel more comfortable being open about their views, whether mainstream or divergent, online. Guillier (2008) found in her comparison study that students felt less intimidated when online and that they perceived their

viewpoints were not being held against them. In addition, students reported that they were less embarrassed to diverge from what appeared to be the class-held position. Yet, these students also reported that face-to-face discussion felt more realistic as it permitted them to interact on an immediate basis. In this study, students completed an open question survey at the end of the course, which served as the basis for the findings; the later responses though possibly diminished the accuracy of the findings as they reflected a holistic view as opposed to an individual and immediate evaluation of each discussion.

Despite these differences, the two formats may have potential to aid in compensating for the other's weaknesses. In a study of a high school language arts classroom, Yu (2009) used online discussions in the classroom as an intervention. It had been observed that the primarily low-achieving students in these English classes did not participate or feel comfortable in class discussions on literature. Therefore, laptops were brought into the classroom to allow students the opportunity to discuss their responses to what they had been reading in class. Following several weeks of discussion online about their reading, students were reintroduced to face-to-face discussion. Close to the entirety of the class participated in the face-to-face discussions following the series of online discussions, allowing Yu to make the conclusion that the online discussion had made students feel more at ease participating in face-to-face discussions. Yu's findings may be helpful in generating a solution to what some teachers claim as an obstacle to face-to-face discussion: students' social and intellectual immaturity as well as their inability to deal with a diversity of viewpoints and perspectives (Larson, 1997).

Student perceptions of online and face-to-face discussion formats vary and are often conflicting across the formats. However, structural issues may also account for some of these emotional perceptions. For instance, Larson and Keiper (2002) conclude that the lack of voice

elements such as tone, speed, and fluctuation in online discussions detract from the emotional strength of certain arguments, therefore making disagreement and comfort so much easier to achieve online. Such differences in emotional responses to the two formats may have implications for how students respond to controversial issue deliberations. These implications may include: how students respond to one another in agreement or disagreement; the participation rates; the honesty of responses; and willingness to diverge from a previously accepted viewpoint. In addition, it must be kept in mind that these preferences do not necessarily indicate that students learn or perform better in one format over the other.

Student Critical Reasoning in Online and Face-to-Face Deliberations

Teacher-educators often view a discussion or deliberation as successful based on the presence of critical reasoning that students display (Oliver and Shaver, 1966; Hess, 2008; Parker, 2002). If discussions lacked critical reasoning, the learning goals most likely would not be achieved and thus skill development would be absent as well. In addition, the lack of critical reasoning can prevent a deliberation from truly constructing a positive and thorough solution that would benefit the common good. Several studies have been conducted comparing individual students' performances between online and face-to-face discussions, thus providing insight to the learning process and outcomes within these two formats.

What students perceive they are learning versus what is seen by teachers and researchers may differ from one another. Meyer (2007) conducted a study in her *Historical and Policy Perspectives of Higher Education* during one semester that asked students to discuss five controversial issues both online and face-to-face; discussions were coupled around a theme, such as race, but the online and face-to-face iterations would differ from one another in the question

or prompt. Her study analyzed student perceptions of each discussion as they related to student ability to remember details, potential for more depth in contributions, and who said what. She found that students believed the face-to-face and online discussions were nearly equal in their depth level and comprehensiveness. Yet, students noted that they learned more, as well as learned better, in the face-to-face setting. One surprise that Meyer encountered was that students felt they could better recall who said what in the face-to-face setting; she had hypothesized that the script nature of online discussions would help students remember more of who said what online as opposed to in face-to-face discussions. About one-third of Meyer's students saw no difference in the two settings. This study poses issues for online discussions in that it may suggest, due to the number of students reporting they could better recall who said what in face-to-face discussions, that students largely post without recognizing or studying the contributions of others.

Meyer's findings are largely supported by those found in Larson and Keiper's study of a teacher-educator course that examined discussions about issues they could investigate within their own classroom. Larson and Keiper (2002) found that interaction amongst discussants was largely absent online. They reached this conclusion by noting the high frequency of declarative statements made by students with little regard to exploring statements made by others or posing questions. Yet, these statements also had more elaboration and reflection in comparison to statements made in class. However, in this study, the researchers simply looked at what they had encountered without a formal coding process or definition for the types of statements being made. Thus, the conclusions about critical reasoning are rather subjective and lack a means of consistent scale of measurement.

Brooks and Jeong (2006) tried to correct the absence of interaction online in an experimental study. After noticing what they found as too much concentration on conveying one's own opinion, they asked students to begin labeling their posts a certain component of critical reasoning that their post reflected. For instance, a student might post under the heading of "Clarification Question" to another student's previous contribution. They utilized a quantitative approach to determine if the increase in critical reasoning was statistically significant. In their results, they found that labeling postings to identify the critical reasoning elements they utilized had a moderate effect size in increasing the frequency of questioning, use of supporting arguments, and the challenging of opposing arguments. Their study indicates the possibility that when students are asked to think about their contributions in terms of what they add to a discussion, the variance in critical reasoning as well as interaction may increase. Yet, this study also may echo what Palmer, Holt, and Bray (2008) caution against: as teachers ask more of their students in online discussions, participation and enjoyment may decrease.

Guiller (2008) studied discussion of controversial issues in science, such as evolution, in a college course. Rather than have separate discussions, Guiller's students carried over conversations from online into the classroom and vice versa, thus reflecting a type of blended format. The elements of critical reasoning found largely mirror the same results other studies found. His students demonstrated an increased inclusion of evidence and reasoning online when supporting their opinions, but spent more time in their face-to-face discussions seeking to support or challenge one another's contributions. Yet, Guiller's study also found that the amount of new ideas and evidence was always higher in whichever format took place first.

As stated previously, critical reasoning is largely related to the decisions made by the teacher. Journell (2008) reached the conclusion that students could not critically reason about

history online in his study of online discussions about controversial historical issues. Yet, much of his analysis focuses on the decisions or lack thereof that the teacher made in assisting students. Larson (2003) conducted a comparison study, but hosted the online discussions in a classroom during school time. His findings suggested that students could not respond to one another's arguments when discussing controversial issues online; yet, the teacher leading the discussion made the error of asking students to read and respond to an increasingly complex discussion in limited time. The choice to use online discussion during a limited time frame, such as one class period, forces students to decrease reflection and try to respond as reasonably as they can with a decreasing time window.

While critical reasoning may be evident in both online and face-to-face discussions, the type of critical reasoning differs between the two formats. Interaction between students, such as questioning the logic of a peer's claims, lacks in frequency online, but is more commonly observed in face-to-face discussions. In comparison however, the depth of arguments and the inclusion of supporting details and evidence is widespread online as students seek to clarify their own opinions. Yet, to state that students simply respond differently when they are either together or away from one another is too simplistic of a conclusion. One must consider the structural elements of face-to-face and online discussions in order to understand why types of critical reasoning might differ.

Structural Differences Between Online and Face-to-Face Deliberations

As stated previously, the differences that exist between online and face-to-face lend themselves to different uses as well as lead to different student outcomes. These structural

aspects may serve as complements to one another or enhance student learning where the other format might fail.

One complaint against face-to-face discussions held by teachers is that it takes too much class time and that they need to focus on content coverage (Onosko, 1991). Thus, the outside nature of online deliberations can help solve these concerns. It is not recommended to host online discussions during classtime due to the difficulty in reading so many posts in a limited time frame; students find the reading burdensome and distracting from constructing their own contributions (Chen and Looi, 2007; Larson and Keiper, 2002). Yet, even with online discussions, the amount of time allotted to students to participate is a critical factor. Since it takes place outside of class time, Jeong and Frazier (2007) recommend that teachers provide at least two weeks for students to complete a discussion online. In addition, they found in their research that discussions started at the beginning of the week solicit more interaction in comparison to discussions started mid-week or later. Part of their hypothesis is that students do not respond to homework assignments over weekend times, thus discussions initiated at the beginning of the week give ample time for students to post their own opinions and then respond to one another.

However, with online discussions often taking place via the Internet if outside of the classroom, teachers must structure them to account for student privacy and security. For instance, student identities should be shielded from public view and obscene material must be prevented from being posted. Teachers should also consider the needs of their students in relation to the digital divide; if students do not have Internet access, accommodations must be made for them to offset their lack of ability to join the discussion. (Berson and Berson, 2006)

Can Deliberation Occur?

Historically, some political theorists have rejected the notion that citizens are capable of deliberation. For instance, Plato in *The Republic* as well as James Madison in “Federalist #10” argue that an enlightened citizenry is doubtful and thus the concept of citizen rule should be questioned. In a critique of American democracy, conservative commentator Judge Richard Posner claims that the average citizen is incapable of participating in deliberations. As opposed to deliberation, Posner argues that the practice of voting is the best action for a citizen to take part in as it helps the citizen indicate their policy preferences. For Posner, the average citizen is incapable of truly comprehending the complex components of controversial policy issues. (McCaffery, et al., 2004) Yet, Posner’s critique is not a singly-held opinion or shared amongst political scientists only; educators also question the ability for students to successfully deliberate controversial political issues.

In his examination of several foundational works in the history of advocacy for the discussion of controversial public issues, Leming (2003) argues that these key works do not provide proof that such discussion can truly occur. He asserts that Oliver and Shaver’s famous study *Teaching Public Issues in the High School* (1966) did not reveal a student capacity to be able to clearly state their position as well as maintain this position; in addition, he argues that if students demonstrated skills during the discussion, Oliver and Shaver fail to demonstrate that these skills improved over the span of a course.

Leming then moves forward to critiquing Newmann’s body of work. While not necessarily focusing on discussion, Newmann (1991) looked at students’ ability to utilize the skills associated with discussion (examples including using analogy and the identification of value conflicts) in writing about a controversial political issue. Moving beyond Newmann’s similar criticism of few teachers being able to implement such activities in their classroom,

Leming draws attention to Newmann's finding that students could not incorporate higher-order thinking into their persuasive responses ("What should we do?") to the issue. Leming argues that if Newmann encountered such great difficulty in identifying nine classrooms nationwide where teaching of controversial public issues occurred, then his finding of little higher-order thinking by the students must be weighed considerably.

The final study Leming utilizes in his critique is the 1994 study of using "You-Decide" Channel One video segments to spark discussion of controversial public issues in the classroom. Johnston, Anderman, Klenk, and Harris (1994) sought to compare several classes of students in their ability to discuss the controversial public issues of school prayer. In their study, they had several classes participate in controversial issue discussions for a three-month period in addition to a control group that watched the television sessions but did not participate in discussions. Both the control and experimental group failed to demonstrate the ability to substantiate their positions while also failing to incorporate any new arguments beyond what had been introduced in the video. In addition, it was noted that the students in both groups failed to move beyond their initial position towards a collective group understanding.

Leming's lengthy criticisms do not come without suggestions for improvement however. In actuality, Leming echoes the need for citizens to be able to deliberate skillfully about controversial public issues, but does not believe that adolescents are capable of doing so. He argues that critical reasoning evolves in stages and that high school students have not moved beyond stages two and three (of four). However, critics of Leming find that he overstates his criticisms and does not take into account the current trends that work against the inclusion of problem-based learning and deliberation in social studies classrooms. Newmann (1991) in explaining the findings that Leming criticizes identifies numerous institutional or educational

trends that worked against his findings. He explained that teachers frequently are unable to construct a specialized curriculum consistent with problem-based inquiry and that they are often unable to teach the skills needed to address controversial public issues. One finding from the study that Leming fails to take into account is the students' higher performance on the traditional assessment that followed the intervention; thus, in Newmann's study, exposure to problem-based learning increased general student thoughtfulness. Onosko (1991), in his study of efforts to promote critical reasoning in schools, found that the process of implementing problem-based learning is subject to the "instability and uncertainty in the process of school change" and therefore proponents will consistently have to address barriers to instructional change that is common in public education (p. 361). Thus, the lack of research findings to support the claim that students can critically reason about controversial public issues may not be a direct implication of student ability, but rather a result of institutional barriers.

Bransford (2000) summarizes recent research on learning theory to make the conclusion that students, even younger than those of high school age, are capable of reasoning critically about complex problems. Beginning with infants, he argues that human minds seek stimulation from their surrounding environment which spurs the mind into active learning. In addition, the brain uses previous experiences to shape its ability to respond to future stimuli. With an understanding of how the brain works, Bransford continues to make the connections between cognitive science and the classroom, arguing that student critical reasoning is a product of appropriately constructed curriculum and teacher responses to students' conceptual frameworks, as opposed to seeing students possessing a tabula rosa. Rather than introducing students to a ground coverage approach to learning, he believes that students' cognitive abilities

are best developed in response to teaching that emphasizes depth, communication, and multiple opportunities to reconstruct one's understanding.

In examining collective student decision-making about complex issues, research is often lacking and, what research that does exist, is critical of their ability to solve problems collaboratively. In their synthesis on group decision-making in secondary classrooms, Gall and Gall (1990) conclude that group decision-making is wrought with flaws, such as agreement for the sake of concluding the task; therefore, they conclude students are more prone and better adept to produce stronger solutions as individuals working alone. Johnson and Johnson (2009) argue that decision-making and deliberation may not even be beneficial to students as it stresses that divergent views should be forfeited to help the group reach one decision.

Despite all of these hesitations, much of the criticism has been theoretical in nature. In addition, Leming's critiques did not pertain to deliberation specifically, but rather student exploration of controversial public issues. Perhaps, a focused model of discussion could provide results indicative of student ability to reason critically about controversial issues. Parker (1999; 2002) largely admits that his model of student decision-making through deliberation is largely theoretical, but that it can be done under the right circumstances. Using specific studies concerning issues-based learning, Parker argues that the right conditions have to be met for his deliberative model to succeed. Such conditions include: teacher-scaffolded support; expectations of high success; the need for an established model to guide the process; dedicated time to explore the issue that will be discussed; and teacher experience in leading discussion about controversial political issues. His acknowledgement echoes Richardson's claim that most of constructivist pedagogy at the secondary level is largely untested with very little research focused on student outcomes (Richardson, 2003). Specifically, a large unknown exists whether technology can

successfully serve as a supplement or alternative to more traditional means of implementing constructivist teaching approaches (Cuban, 2001; Doolittle and Hicks, 2003; Swan and Hofer, 2008).

Throughout my review and search for relevant research studies, I have been unable to identify any implemented studies that sought to explore the learning results gained from the implementation of deliberation within a secondary social studies classroom. In addition, research is largely nonexistent regarding the comparison of discussion formats in a well-designed high school social studies setting that goes beyond assessing student general impressions and preferences between formats. Therefore, while some research suggests that similar discussions may not be achievable, deliberation of controversial political issues is still largely an untested pedagogical tool. In addition, the emergence of Web 2.0 tools over the past decade may serve as an environment where such discussion can flourish for secondary students or may complement face-to-face deliberation. These areas need to be studied for their implications on student outcomes as successful deliberation can aid in developing a progressive, citizen-led democracy, sharpen citizen action skills, and enhance student learning about complex and controversial issues.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The following chapter aims to provide a thorough and descriptive review of the means utilized to address the focus of the study. The primary research question guiding the study is: *how does students' group decision-making, when deliberating controversial political issues, differ between face-to-face, online, and blended formats?* Based on the aforementioned question, the following sub-questions were developed to enhance the findings that would address the primary research question:

1. To what extent are students capable of reaching a collective decision during deliberation of a controversial political issue?
2. When students are deliberating, what types of critical reasoning are most evident in the three formats?
3. How does the choice of topic influence the student's participation in the deliberation?

These questions are aimed at developing an understanding of one class' experience with deliberating controversial political issues through three iterations: face-to-face; online; and a blended format of online and face-to-face interaction. The findings are intended to fill a gap in existing literature that concerns students' collective performance in discussions on controversial issues, the implementation of a deliberation model of discussion, and the impact of using the Internet to facilitate a constructivist pedagogical discussion method. Finally, this study also addresses the larger call for research aimed at providing findings that support the development of

strong pedagogical tools for teachers to use within their social studies classrooms (Cuban, 2001; Doolittle and Hicks, 2003; Richardson, 2003; Swan and Hofer, 2008).

The methodological and epistemological orientations of the study are described in this chapter to provide a framework of the study's design. While reviewing the framework, the design of the study will be discussed as well as the various data sources and analysis strategies used to explore the data. In addition, extensive detail will be dedicated to addressing various validity and reliability issues as well as the efforts taken to mitigate any threats. In concluding this chapter, a thorough description of the timeline and the study implementation will be provided.

Methodology Framework

The study utilized a mixed-methods case study research approach. The case-study structure enhances the ability to understand the three formats as a single product in their natural contexts (Merriam, 1998). Each of these lesson iterations were clearly bound in both their purpose and time, thus generating three distinct units to be studied (Patton, 2002). Unlike a grounded theory or ethnographic research study, this study did not seek to understand what occurred in a typical civics classroom and generate theory or findings based on such observation (Creswell, 2007). Rather, this study sought to explore the learning outcomes of a purposefully-designed intervention, deliberation of controversial political issues, in three different settings: online; face-to-face; and blended, a combination of online and face-to-face deliberation. Thus, the study took on the dimensions of a collective case study as it explored three different deliberation formats, independent from one another, while still attempting to understand a certain issue, the process of deliberation (Creswell, 2007). These cases sought to generate insight into

the holistic discussion experience and aid in explaining the learning and teaching outcomes. This study did not seek to explaining causality by examining the impact of independent variables on dependent variables (Brown, 1992). The deliberations, by taking place within a real classroom as opposed to a closed, controlled setting, were exposed to many variables and complexities that can be expected in other teachers' classrooms (Sandoval and Ball, 2004; Brown, 1992). Thus, this study did not seek to control for all variables, but rather acknowledge them through thick and vivid description of the occurrences that were observed and experienced.

In this study, I assumed that to understand a phenomenon or an observed behavior is problematic in the context that what is understood to have occurred is never absolute. Thus, in adopting a post-positivism approach to qualitative research, I recognized that truth could not be achieved, but that it is possible to make plausible claims as well as to distinguish between what “might have occurred” and “what most likely occurred” (Phillips and Burbles, 2000). To balance the subjective discretionary judgment that is common in qualitative research, multiple data inputs and analysis tools are utilized to corroborate claims and provide a thorough data trail to verify the findings (Creswell, 2007). The adoption of a post-positivism epistemology allowed me to minimize potential bias and heightens the accuracy of findings, while emphasizing the empirical findings that are characterized by independence of judgment, plausibility of results, consistency or dependability in data, and explainable outliers or inconsistencies (Patton, 2002). Post-positivism and case study research allowed the methods employed in this study to move beyond a purist perspective by allowing for multiple means of explaining observed learning outcomes (Hoadley, 2004).

Unlike a pure experimental research study, the findings from the collected data of a case study are not intended to be generalizable. They are specific to the unit observed for the specific

study and the individual context of the classes in which the study is implemented. The findings or conclusions are aimed at providing a better understanding of the educational value of deliberation as implemented in three different contexts.

Participants and Setting

A purposeful sample was utilized to select a population that met multiple needs for the study. The participants chosen were students in my Advanced Placement United States Government and Politics course. Of the twenty-four students in the course, twenty students submitted informed consent participation letters; their participation was not known until they graduated since they submitted their permission forms to another teacher. Throughout this study, the students are referred to by assigned pseudonyms. Twelve males and eight females chose to participate, thus making up the gender composition of the study. Going beyond gender, one Korean, one Chinese, and two African-American students participated adding to the diversity of the study, helping develop the democratic and plural environment that Gutmann (1987) argues makes schools a rich environment for developing future citizens. Each of the participants had previously taken an Advanced Placement course, thus they were familiar with the rigorous expectations of this type of course.

These students attended a suburban 10th through 12th grade high school in a community that is based around a land-grant public university. As a result of its proximity to the university, the school often works collaboratively with the education school within the university on classroom projects. The school is approximately 1500 students representing a broad spectrum of diversity with 66% being Caucasian, 28% African-American, 5% Asian-American, 1% Hispanic-American, and 1% other. In the population, over 50 languages are spoken. Twenty-five percent of the total student population received a free or reduced lunch.

Rather than choosing to observe another teacher's classroom, I decided that I possess greater control in my own class, which guards against the threat of discussions being canceled or limited and error in designing problem-based learning curriculum. Studies of student-reasoning and the process of dialogue are often threatened by teacher inexperience leading controversial issue discussions; these weaknesses are often exposed in the decisions about how to lead such discussions or the manner in which the teacher prepares students to participate (Larson, 2003; Journell, 2008). With four years of experience in leading both face-to-face and online discussions as well as completing a pilot study on individual student reasoning in discussions across online and face-to-face formats, I believe that my personal experience has provided insight into designing a problem-centered curriculum that prepares students to participate knowledgably in deliberating controversial political issues.

The Advanced Placement course was chosen for multiple reasons. First, the state curriculum in which the school aligns itself with allots less than nine weeks to a general American Government course on a block schedule structure. Such time allows for one or two deliberations to take place in the context of an in-depth problem-based unit, but does not allow for the amount of time needed to develop deliberative skills or the time to measure growth. It is recommended that an online discussion of a controversial issue have a minimum of two weeks to complete (Jeong and Frazier, 2007). A nine-week American Government course fails to provide adequate time to introduce students to the skills needed for deliberation as well as to allow for three iterations of deliberation, especially discussions that are conducted online. Problem-based learning necessitates dedicated time for problem development and student exploration of the issue, which the AP class affords me by being a year-long course (Rossi, 1995).

Secondly, with the limited research on deliberation in high school classrooms, both face-to-face and online, the use of an Advanced Placement course provides the possibility of a case that produces findings indicative of what a model scenario may produce in one's classroom. Hess (2009) argues that case studies embedded in a classroom with high-performing students provide the encouragement needed for other teachers to move forward and try various pedagogical methods based on the success that others have encountered. The advanced nature of the students allows for one to understand the possibilities and potential of deliberation, not necessarily what might probably occur in an "average" classroom. While primarily homogeneous in academic ability, these students reflect a myriad of diversity in gender, ethnicity, and political orientations. The student diversity in this class as well as the limited student exposure to deliberation establishes commonality with many other classrooms, Advanced Placement and general track, making the possibility that what is found in this study could possibly occur elsewhere. (Hess, 2009; Shulman, 1983) In addition, the touting of AP courses as a foundational component of curriculum reform presents AP courses as rich settings for the study of curriculum innovation and experimentation (Parker, 2011). Using the AP classes as the focus of this study also provides a greater opportunity to illuminate what is hoped to be observed. With little research dedicated to studying deliberation in the secondary classroom, using what might be assumed as a more information-producing sample may help manifest the phenomenon that is being observed and provide more data to use in exploring the potential use of deliberation in secondary classrooms (Patton, 2002).

Data Sources and Analysis

To enhance the descriptive quality of the findings as well as to provide a means of triangulation, a variety of data inputs as well as analysis techniques were utilized. While the

inquiry process is largely qualitative in its naturalistic approach, some of the analysis and data reflected a quantitative approach in its exploration and reporting. All data initially collected was qualitative in nature, yet, in the analysis phase, some received quantitative ratings or codes and analyzed through statistical means. Including multiple data sources and analyzing the data with a variety of methods enhanced the ability to address the research questions from multiple perspectives. In addition, the diversity in sources and analysis allowed for the examination of the findings for consistency and validity through the process of triangulation (Patton, 2002; Creswell, 2008).

Qualitative Data and Analysis

The transcript of each deliberation was utilized as the principal source of data to address the primary research question as well as the first sub-question that explored student critical reasoning. Thus, student contributions during each deliberation served as the principal source of data. Using typological analysis with previously constructed models or understandings (Patton, 2002), I initially applied two established coding mechanisms to examine the content for two different purposes: applying the deliberation model to the class discussion and identifying various components of critical reasoning.

The first coding system was based on the deliberation model (see Table 1) that is proposed by Parker (1999). Segments of class discussions were analyzed for evidence of the eight stages in the deliberation structure or for consideration of what must be considered by policymakers, such as stakeholders or consequences of possible implementation. The deliberation as a whole was examined to determine the following: evidence of the eight stages; the manner in which these eight stages are reached, if students address them; the amount of time

and student reasoning dedicated to specific stages of the model; and the depth at which students address the stages.

The second coding system is designed to analyze the elements of critical reasoning that students utilized during the deliberations. The criteria and codes (see Table 4) are a combination of codes and categories from several studies, which focused on critical reasoning as exhibited during discussions of controversial public issues (Hess and Posselt, 2002; Guiller et al., 2008; Landis et al., 2007). The information derived from the application of this coding system was intended to yield insight towards how students critically reason about controversial political issues in addition to how students utilize previous contributions and respond to their peers. In relation to deliberation, this analysis provided information such as whether students are able to question policy proposals or stipulate dimensions of a proposed policy. In addition, this coding system was used in conjunction with the first coding system to help describe how students reason during the different stages of deliberation. For instance, one might note that students are more likely to contribute an unmentioned solution (NS+) during Stage 4, the phase in which students are expected to develop options in respect to the controversial political question posed before them.

Table 4: Characteristics of positive and negative critical reasoning with coding scheme

Indicator	Positive (+1)	Negative (-1)
Relevance	R+ (Relevant statements)	R- (Irrelevant statements, diversions, trivial)
Novelty, new information, ideas, solutions	NP+ (new problem-related information) NI+ (new ideas for deliberation) NS+ (new solutions to the problems) NQ+ (welcoming new ideas)	NP- (reporting what has been said without acknowledgement of speaker) NS- (accepting first offered solution without critique or questioning) NQ- (putting down new ideas without reason)
Bringing in outside knowledge or experience	OE+ (drawing on personal experience) OC+ (referring to course material) OM+ (using relevant outside material; independent research) OQ+ (welcoming outside knowledge) OA+ (Using an appropriate analogy)	OQ- (putting down attempts to bring in outside knowledge without reason) OF- (lack of or inappropriate use of evidence when making a factual statement) O- (asserting prejudices or assumptions without evidence) OA- (using an inappropriate or far-fetched analogy)
Questioning	QP+ (using a probing question to elicit more information)	QA- (using a question to ask about an off-topic)

	or to get someone else involved)	conversation or due to lack of attention)
	QC+ (questioning for clarification or affirmation)	
Linking ideas,	LO+ (outlining conversation)	L- (repeating information without making inferences or
interpretations	LI+ (identifying a definitional, ethical, or factual dilemma)	offering an interpretation)
	LS+ (stipulating an answer-fact, definition-to move deliberation forward)	LA- (stating that one shares the ideas or opinions of another without taking these further)
	LT+ (making a clear transition to a relevant issue)	
Justification	JP+ (providing proof or examples)	JP- (irrelevant or obscuring questions or examples)
	JS+ (justifying solutions or judgments)	JS- (offering judgments or solutions without explanations or justifications)
	JC+ (setting out the consequences of situation or solution, whether advantages or disadvantages)	JC- (offering several solutions without suggestions of which one is most appropriate)
Width of understanding	W+ (widening deliberation-shows problem in a larger perspective; intervention strategies within a wider framework)	W- (narrowing conversation to address fragments or diversions)

Critical	CC+ (recognizing a contradiction in an argument)	CR- (challenges other opinions or ideas through
assessment	CD+ (stating disagreement by challenging accuracy, logic, relevance, or clarity)	rudeness)

In addition to the discussions, a series of interviews were conducted with a purposeful sampling of the participating students. Unlike the transcripts from the deliberations or the student-produced writing samples, the interview transcripts in a mixed-methods study assists in discovering the personal feelings and intentions of the participants, thus allowing the researcher to gain insight into the perspective of the student (Patton, 2002; Kvale, 2008). In designing the study, it was intended that following each deliberation, five to seven students would be asked to participate in an interview. Using the students who provided their consent to participate, a purposeful sample conducted by an outside interviewer was used to generate a mix of male and female students. These students were intended to remain constant throughout the study to maintain a consistent narrative and perspective.

While not a primary data source, the purpose of the interviews was to allow for student insight into the deliberations that are studied. The questions and protocol (see Appendix E) intended for each interview were designed based on a pilot study completed the year before this study in which students were interviewed individually as well as members of focus groups in respect to their thoughts regarding discussion in the classroom and amongst the three formats. Questions were designed to gather the following information: emotional responses, such as level of comfort, to the deliberation; what the student perceived they learned; what challenges the student perceived as to have occurred in creating consensus for the class; student perception of their performance; and the degree as well as the process to which student opinions evolved or changed during the deliberation. Choosing to study my own class required me to limit my involvement in the interview process. Thus, an outside interviewer was selected to identify the students who would participate, arrange the meetings for interviews, and conduct the interviews.

A final qualitative data source used throughout the study was a researcher journal. The collection of field notes in a journal allows the researcher to revisit observations later on in the analysis phase and describe for the reader what occurred in a manner that helps them experience the various deliberations in the context of their implemented environments (Patton, 2002). In the journal, entries were dated and, if possible, were characterized by thick, descriptive accounts of such topics as: the nature or decisions made during implementation of the interventions; quotations that stood out; my own feelings or reactions to the experience; commentary on the significance of events; and interactions amongst students and themselves or I in respect to the deliberations, such as comments made as asides or questions raised about the deliberations outside of the discussions themselves.

Quantitative Data and Analysis

I chose to utilize two coding systems in generating quantitative data. The established qualitative coding system for critical reasoning in deliberations was examined for basic descriptive statistics, including frequency and mean of the various critical reasoning indicators such as questioning for clarification. These statistics of the varying elements of critical reasoning and skills in deliberations allows the researcher and audience to understand the cognitive approach that students utilized in this learning method. In addition, the frequency can also provide insight as to the indicators of the varying stages of the deliberation model. For instance, it may become noticeable that students are more likely to identify value conflicts in the “Problem Definition” stage. Such findings aid in exposing the strengths and limitations of student critical reasoning about controversial political issues; therefore, it could direct the teacher towards where more interventions could occur.

A rating system was used to group and examine the policy opinions held by students in regards to the controversial political issues posed before them. Each policy option was assigned a numerical code identifying the option that students chose to adopt. For example, if a student decided that maintaining the Electoral College is the best policy solution, this solution was coded a “1,” while the decision to use popular vote may be coded a “2.” Using the “ticket,” or a pre-deliberation preparation assignment (see Appendix A), as a pretest, I identified the student’s initial response or orientation to the policy question. Following the deliberation, the students’ written response paper to the policy question helped indicate their position post-deliberation (see Appendix B). The response paper format remained consistent throughout the study with two modifications for the political character deliberation. The positions were compared to determine to what extent a difference existed prior to the deliberation and to what extent did a consensus emerge following the deliberation or if a change occurred in student thinking about the issue and question. Student commentary during the deliberations and transcripts from the interviews were also compared to this data as a means of identifying a potential point in the process in which student thinking shifted.

The consensus and disagreement rates were also compared across the varying topics, formats, and students. This process helped provide insight as to whether certain topics or deliberation formats created more disagreement or agreement. In addition, it helped reveal whether deliberations are primarily products of the students that participate in them, thus more individualistic to each class and setting. For instance, certain students may be inclined to maintain their original position throughout each of the deliberations, while others change their opinion following each deliberation. Such information can help determine whether or not the

learning theory prescribed by Johnson and Johnson (2009) applies to the deliberation model of discussion for this class.

At the conclusion of the course, students participated in an online survey (see Appendix E). The question structure was derived largely from previous comparison studies conducted at the collegiate level seeking to understand learning and emotional reactions to the varying formats: online and face-to-face discussion (Bliuc, et al., 2010; Meyer, 2006). This survey sought to solicit the collective opinions of the class in response to which format (online, face-to-face, or blended) that they preferred. Unlike the interviews, the survey provided students the opportunity to compare the formats in a collective fashion rather than providing feedback to one specific intervention. The questionnaire, similar to the interview process, was intended to help generate evidence that can form associations between observed behavior and student perceptions (Ellis, et al., 2006; Meyer, 2006). Students recorded their responses using a Likert scale as well as binary questions that sought to capture preferences based on emotions, learning ability, and interest.

Table 5: Sources and Purposes of Data

Data Source	Purpose/Information Yielded
Discussion Transcripts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical reasoning • Adherence to typology
Researcher Journal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researcher insights
Student Deliberation tickets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student policy preference prior to deliberation
Student Post-Deliberation Writing Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparison of students views on the issue following the deliberation • Student reasoning to support final opinion
Student Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student emotional and learning responses to deliberation format and topic
Class Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student perceptions of deliberation formats

Limitations

The conclusions that I drew from this study are particular to the time, place, and individuals that took part in the phenomena observed. Yet, in order to assure that my findings were trustworthy to both myself and those who share an interest in this study, I needed to address both the external and internal validity as well as reliability of my study. (Johnson, 1997) With limited control over most variables, excluding the facilitation of the deliberations, and very little data subject to statistical analysis, I relied on thorough descriptions, triangulation of data, and

logical argumentation to ensure that the possible threats to validity and reliability are controlled and addressed.

In an effort to foresee various threats to the data, I conducted a one-year pilot study that focused on the critical reasoning of six students in online and face-to-face deliberations. One of the major errors in this pilot study was the capturing of data during face-to-face deliberations. Thus, to ensure accurate transcripts of the face-to-face deliberations, I sought to capture data through two means: the audio recordings of the discussion through the use of a handheld audio recorder and the use of a student aide to keep a running list of the order in which individuals spoke. The audio recorder provided me the opportunity to store the recording both on the device itself as well as save it to a computer. The student aide assisted me with the running list as a means of checking the flow of the transcribed discussion. These two means were utilized to help cover gaps of uncertainty in what was said by whom during the deliberations. In addition, in the pilot study, I limited my analysis to a select set of students, which resulted in the inability to have a full set of data for each discussion; some students chose not to participate in certain discussions while a few were absent on specific days in which the discussion was held. By focusing on the deliberation holistically in this study, I was able to avoid such gaps in data collection.

One potential limitation to the data was the possibility of coercion by the researcher on the subjects. This is intensified due to the relationship of the researcher as the teacher of the subjects. To ensure that the students were not deceived as well as to ensure that students retained their autonomy in the classroom, informed consent forms were distributed to students and their parents (Mills, 2007). To prevent pressure from participating, a fellow teacher collected the forms from the students and withheld these until they were picked up by the selected interviewer. This ensured that I was unaware of who provided consent and who did not until after data

collection was completed and grades were submitted for the course, thus diminishing researcher bias towards certain students as well as any possible feeling of coercion on the part of the students.

Yet, by using my own class as the participants in the study, the validity of the reported findings was enhanced. The full immersion of the researcher into the observed environment provides a greater opportunity to develop familiarity and understanding of occurring behavior, such as the context of social interaction or the connection between students' mental states and behavior (Patton, 2002). Unlike an outside researcher entering a classroom environment to observe a discussion, the use of the teacher as a leading researcher or participant in examining the findings allows for more insight on social dynamics of the classroom to be included in the reported findings. The teacher is also able to take more notice of the dynamic ever-changing environment of the classroom, thus accounting for the development of the students over the span of the iterations which may be inaccessible to a casual observer (Kennedy-Lewis, 2012).

In order to mitigate the possibility of coercion during the interview process, the interviews were conducted by a third party. The transcripts of the interviews were held from me until the chosen students graduated, which occurred at the conclusion of the course. This third party was provided a question script, with possible follow-up questions, and underwent a series of practice interviews. The development of an interview protocol with the third party intended that the interviews and the goals would meet the researcher's expectations. The third-party was asked to retain the transcripts until the end of the school year to prevent any possible complications of my role as teacher with the students.

Another potential threat to the data is the researcher's bias towards the use of discussion in the classroom and online. To combat internal bias, my perspective and history with the focus of this study must be made known. This acknowledgment is in addition to using thorough research methods and vivid description of the findings to enhance reliability. I have used various forms of discussion in my classroom for four years, when I began teaching. These approaches include: role-playing; Socratic seminar; deliberation; fish-bowl; and general discussion of issues. I have also used online discussion for the past four years in my Advanced Placement classes. In initiating this study, I embarked on an effort to either validate or invalidate a pedagogical tool that I have frequently used in my classroom and centered many of my class lessons around. The results from this study were intended to help inform and impact the decisions I make about implementing a certain curriculum in the classroom. While I have strived to uphold a stance of empathetic neutrality, such a stance cannot be wholly achieved, thus I relied on triangulation of data, both sources and analysis techniques, as well as a commitment to providing thick and rich description in reporting the findings and implementation of the study (Patton, 2008). Yet, I also believe my experience enhances this study. I have had experience using the critical reasoning coding in another discussion study led by my dissertation committee chair. A leader in state technology professional development for educators often uses my deliberation assessment framework as well as my online discussion model to demonstrate to teachers how they can use online discussion to enhance their students' learning experience.

To help maintain the reliability in the instruments used in the study, two actions were taken. The formats for the deliberations were previously introduced and utilized in the class prior to the observed deliberation, thus ensuring there existed a level of familiarity in use for students. Secondly, the ticket and post-deliberation writing assignment remained consistent, with the

exception of one paragraph for the character-focused deliberation that occurred in the blended format. Various teaching tools, such as the ticket and question scripts, will be included in the appendix to ensure reliability, or transferability, of this study.

Another means of ensuring reliability beyond the inclusion of the codes in aforementioned tables was the addition of a coding guide in the final appendix (see Appendix G). The coding guide, developed through the use of a provided template, contains a description of the principal units of analysis (Henry, 2003). Each code is illustrated through the inclusion of a description as well as the accompaniment of a sample quote derived from the collected data. Any emergent codes are included as well.

Finally, in the next section, I seek to provide a thorough accounting of the lesson and deliberation implementations. Being that the deliberations were designed to be situated in the context of problem-based learning, I have incorporated a basic description of the unit, the lessons of the unit, and the concepts that I aimed for the students to acquire in the learning process. While the deliberations could occur on their own, the degree to which the students would be knowledgeable of the topic at hand would be questionable and the success of the deliberation possibly compromised; thus the context in which the deliberations occurred is described to help researchers possess the ability to replicate the study.

Implementation Procedures

Data was collected over the span of one AP US Government and Politics course, which is equivalent to a whole school year. Three deliberations were utilized for the purpose of this study. These deliberations were not the first deliberations that the students were asked to participate in

during the course. Therefore, students had been introduced to the format and expectations as well as practiced deliberating prior to the collection of data.

The central question posed during each deliberation coincided with the criteria of controversial political issues. The three questions or topics that were explored through these observations as well as when each iteration occurred are included in Table 6. Each question allowed for multiple answers that asked students to consider more than the basic response of “yes” or “no.” When considering the budget deficit, students had the ability to combine perspectives and create responses that are individualistic to each student as opposed to selecting one of five defined options. In addition, each question has a variety of stakeholders or perspectives that students could consider in addressing the question. For instance, the presidential leadership question required students to think about judgment from an institutional perspective, a citizen’s perspective, as well as the viewpoint of the international community. Finally, each question had not been agreed upon by the public or answered by the Supreme Court, thus allowing for the openness or controversy to exist in answering. To demonstrate, the Electoral College, while a part of the Constitution, is consistently the target of amendment proposals and varying states have experimented with their own reforms, such as Nebraska and Maine. These criteria align themselves with Hess’ vision of controversial political issues and lend themselves to being addressed within Parker’s model of deliberation (Hess, 2009; Parker, 2000).

Table 6: Guiding Questions for Class Deliberations

Policy Deliberation Question	Format	Date
What, if any, changes should be made to the Electoral College?	Online	October 2011
What should the United States Congress do to address the national deficit?	Face-to-Face	December 2011
Which modern president best exemplifies presidential leadership?	Blended (online first, then face-to-face)	February 2011

Prior to the three deliberation iterations, I chose to walk the students through the policymaking, or deliberation, process. Prior to the initiation of this deliberation activity, students reviewed the assessment criteria for deliberations, thus setting an expectation for what deliberation skills students were asked to display (see Appendix D). I hoped that through an in-depth walk-through that students would feel more acquainted with the process and that I, as the teacher, could help troubleshoot any potential areas of confusion regarding the process or things to consider at different stages in the cycle. During this process, I provided guidance in informing students what they should be considering or asking themselves, such as how their policy will be implemented or who the various stakeholders may be. The students were split into two groups in order to provide more time for each student to contribute to the collective discussion as well as to allow me to walk amongst the groups and provide specific feedback. To demonstrate how policymakers think about an issue, I asked the students to choose an issue they felt needed to be addressed at school; while the issues that students may have chosen were not as complex as those discussed during the course, the familiarity with them helped provide students a basic level of information to help guide their discussion without necessitating additional research time. Each

student was provided a scaffold handout that outlined the stages in policymaking deliberation. Students were asked to record their thoughts for each stage, prior to the group discussion, as the group progressed collectively through their deliberation. The first group chose to examine what they perceived as the presence of outdated textbooks, while the other group examined the school Internet filtering. This introduction engaged the students in building both their interest and knowledge of the process, while at the same time modeled what was expected in terms of thinking for more formal iterations.

Each deliberation was set-up in a similar fashion. Following one or more lessons regarding the controversial political issue, students received a ticket, or a pre-deliberation brainstorming guide that had to be completed before allowing one to participate (see Appendix A). Face-to-face deliberations were allotted at least one full class period or longer if students deemed it necessary. In these deliberations, students sat in a circular setting inside the classroom. Each student provided a placard indicating their name. Prior to the deliberation, the expectations were reviewed, including the request that students do not raise their hands. After each deliberation, a class reflection occurred in which we assessed how well we did in answering the policy question as well as critiquing the level of critical thinking evident in the deliberation (Engle & Ochoa, 1988).

Online deliberations took place over a two-week time span providing students adequate time to initiate the deliberation and respond to their peers' posts (Gilbert & Dabbagh, 2005). Similar to the face-to-face deliberations, the "ticket" was collected the day that the deliberation opened online. A written prompt accompanied by the policy question as well as several focusing questions were posted online at the initiation of the online deliberation; this accounted for the absence of teacher guidance and feedback at the outset of the deliberation (Ellis, et al., 2006). I

ensured that feedback was provided by monitoring the online discussion twice daily: once in the morning prior to class and in the evening. Through the monitoring of the site, I was able to post any questions or information that I deemed necessary, similar to how I might interject for guidance or help facilitate in a face-to-face deliberation. As learned during my pilot study, I sought to remind students of the deliberation as well as to stress its importance by discussing its progress in class every day; thus, student attention was directed to the various advances made in the deliberation as well as a means of reminding students that it was an assignment that they were expected to participate in similar to any other homework assignment.

Google Blogger, a free online blog template, served as the chosen technology that was utilized in the online deliberations. Google Blogger was chosen in part due to it being a free service, the reputation for always being available (Edublogs, an educator blog-site, is often unavailable due to service or maintenance), and the ability to limit who comments. Google Blogger allows for the host facilitator to post a prompt online, which provides readers the opportunity to comment on that said prompt. Student comments are listed in chronological order on a webpage dedicated to each prompt. A potential flaw, depending on one's understanding of the technology, is that Google Blogger does not allow for threaded deliberations, which would allow a commentator to individually address another individual's comment in a set-aside conversation. Image 1 portrays the basic interface that a student commentator would interact with when participating online. Google Blogger allows for password protected access to ensure that students' contributions were not exposed to public viewership beyond their class, thus granting them a sense of privacy (Larson, 2005; Berson and Berson, 2006). This system was also chosen over the new school online system, Moodle, which was introduced the year of the study;

to have used Moodle would have possibly allowed for too many technological errors to occur due to the lack of familiarity with the system.

Image 1: Blog Interface of Online Deliberation



The first observed iteration for this study was an online deliberation that examined the Electoral College. Students had previously participated in an online deliberation prior to this iteration that explored the limitations on third political parties. This deliberation fell within a specific unit of study that examined American elections. The essential question guiding the unit was, “To what extent should American elections be more democratic?” During this unit, students examined a myriad of controversial political issues that pertained to American elections, such as the presence (or lack of) third parties, voter turnout, and campaign finance. The component on

the Electoral College, while not the primary focus of the unit, was a significant component of the designed curriculum.

Prior to the online deliberation on the Electoral College, students studied and explored concepts essential to a discussion on the Electoral College, including: proportional versus plurality representation; the two-party system; impacts on voter turnout; and varying institutional theories of democracy. To prepare the students specifically for the deliberation on the Electoral College, students spent two and a half class days examining the issue from multiple perspectives. The intent of the focused study was to provide students the information needed to develop an in-depth understanding of both the contemporary functions of the Electoral College as well as the design and the Founders' intent in proposing this means of electing the nation's chief executive. Students first read *Federalist #68*, which was accompanied by a series of questions aimed at developing an understanding of why the Founders created the Electoral College. Students were provided a flowchart designed by the teacher that demonstrated the timeline and how the Electoral College works. A lecture was given that described how the Electoral College has shaped current campaign strategies and the accompanying critiques of these strategies. Students completed two out-of-class readings that provided a value-based critique and defense of the Electoral College; one reading emphasized the federal nature of the United States along with the need to maintain stability while the other stressed the importance of equality in the weight of one's vote. To conclude the study of the Electoral College, students participated in a jigsaw lesson that asked groups to become experts on varying reform proposals, which included: maintaining the current system; the National Bonus Plan; proportional allocation; Congressional District Method; and direct vote. With these lessons and information, I deemed that the students had enough information to proceed with the deliberation.

Following the jigsaw and its accompanying debriefing, students completed the pre-deliberation writing assessment, or “ticket,” documenting that they have considered the question prior to engaging in deliberation. Students were provided two weeks in the beginning of November to complete the deliberation online. At the beginning of each class period, the online discussion was commented upon in terms of both acknowledging recent contributions as well as reminding students of the need to post. Once the deliberation time had concluded online, students individually formulated their final position on the topic and composed a position paper on the posed question; they completed this paper outside of class over the span of two nights, but without any other accompanying homework.

The second observed deliberation was an in-class, face-to-face deliberation asking “What should the United States Congress do to address the national debt?” This deliberation occurred at the end of the first semester in December. Besides the introductory deliberation, students had participated previously in a face-to-face deliberation on providing equal funding for schools nationwide in conjunction with a unit on federalism; thus, they did have prior experience to a formal face-to-face deliberation. Students participated in this deliberation as the culminating activity in a unit that focused on the controversial political issue of the national debt as well as on how Congress addresses policy issues. Students were given eight class days to prepare for this deliberation. Outside of class, students read the provided book *Where Does the Money Go? Your Guide to the Federal Budget Crisis* (Bittle and Johnson, 2011), which covered topics including, but not limited to, revenue sources and entitlements. During class, debriefings occurred regarding the readings along with other activities that were designed to enhance student thinking about both the debt and Congress’ possible responses to the issues. These activities included: mapping the budget process; political cartoon analysis of varying budget cut proposals; lectures

on representation theories and congressional policymaking obstacles; and math problems using real budgetary proposals. While these lessons did not equally cover as aspects of the budget debate nor build an intensive understanding of congressional policymaking dynamics, students did acquire a foundational knowledge of the primary topics and concepts intertwined in the issue.

Following the completion of the unit's lessons, students were given the same ticket scaffold that accompanied previous deliberations. They completed this assignment overnight prior to the next class, which would be the deliberation. For the deliberation, desks were arranged in a circle with each desk having a name placard attached. I chose to assign students a seat in this iteration as opposed to the first face-to-face class deliberation in which the discussion was centered in one area of the room, where the most involved students sat. My purpose was to spread out the most vocal students around the class with those less-inclined amongst them in hopes that the deliberation would seem to be inclusive of all as well as encourage those who often do not speak to participate since they were around others who do participate. The entire class block was provided for the deliberation. Students, using the standard post-deliberation writing assignment, composed a policy paper answering the initial topic question regarding the debt.

The third iteration focused on the controversial political issue of presidential leadership. Students were asked to answer, "Which modern president best exemplifies presidential leadership?" During the unit, students examined such topics as the character of a leader reading excerpts from Barber's *The Presidential Character*, looked at the varying roles of the president such as chief legislator, and participated in a series of smaller discussions addressing presidency-related topics like the use of force, constitutional dictatorship, and national appeal. Students used President Obama as a model to critique following each lesson. Like the second iteration, this

deliberation was the culminating activity to the unit, but followed after a culminating project; this was different than the previous deliberation, which served as the culminating activity solely. The initial project asked paired students to critique a modern president based on the seven roles of the president as well as other criteria they found relevant; following the completion of the student research, the student pairs presented an assessment of their assigned president to the class and defended their critique.

The third iteration involved a blended deliberation that initially began with online deliberation but concluded with a face-to-face deliberation. Prior to the initiation of the presentations, students completed the pre-deliberation ticket. I decided, after much thought, to have students record their initial beliefs on the basis of information they acquired during the unit and in their previous American history courses rather than wait until the presentations had been completed. To provide structure to the blended format, students initiated the deliberation online as the presentations commenced; students were asked to comment online following each day of presentations, which allowed for reflection on the presentations of that day and consideration of criteria of presidential leadership. The requirement to post online following each day of presentations diverged from the traditional requirement of students to post within the first few days of the discussion, yet I hoped for the students to utilize the information from the presentations while the information was new and fresh. The presentations took up three class days on the alternating block schedule; therefore students had eight days of online discussion. Following the completion of the presentations, students then participated in a face-to-face deliberation for an entire class period. To build a transition between the two linked components, I led students through a summary of what topics had been discussed online and the highlights of the discussion. Unlike the previous two iterations observed, the post-deliberation reflection paper

differed in what was being asked. Rather than ask students to assess feasibility and describe implementation, which are more reflective of policy-oriented controversial political issues, students were asked to provide more support for their choice through comparing their preferred president to other popular choices as well as address who, in relation to stakeholders, would most likely agree with their choice.

Following each deliberation, it was originally planned for the third-party interviewer to arrange to meet with seven students individually to conduct the interviews on the high school's campus. Using the campus as a meeting place provided an accommodating and familiar location for the students, which was intended to assist in generating a greater sense of openness and honesty from the interviewee's perspective. In an effort to ensure the interviews were implemented as planned, I led the interviewer in sample interviews and provided copies of the protocol and script prior to the intended first series of interviews. While communication between the interviewer and I occurred during the year, I did not have access to the interviews until the students finished the course as part of my effort to distance myself from the role of researcher during the course.

The completed interviews diverted from what was originally intended. No interviews were conducted following the first iteration, the online deliberation; rather, the interviewer interviewed several students following the second iteration, the face-to-face deliberation, in respect to their experiences during both of the deliberations (see Table 7 for a list of who interviewed and when). The interviewer originally intended to utilize a provided question script as a guide; prior to the initiation of the study, the interviewer and I rehearsed the interview with the script in order to address potentially unforeseen answers as well as to practice follow-up questions. Yet, despite the rehearsing and provided script, this protocol was not strictly adhered

to. Each interview varied in the questions asked in addition to several questions and answers having to be rejected from the transcript due to issues with the interviewer providing additional commentary that might be interpreted as leading the interviewee towards certain conclusions. Following the end of the school year, the interviewer provided me the recordings of the interviews for me to transcribe and analyze, thus preventing the potential of me, the researcher, being exposed to any data that might infringe on their ability to continue in the role of teacher to the subjects. The original design called for between five to seven students to be interviewed following each deliberation iteration; yet, like the script, this plan was diverted from due to both the choices of the interviewer as well as difficulty in scheduling interviews with the students. The table below indicates what students participated in the interview as well as after which iteration the interview occurred.

Table 7: Student Interviews

Student Name	Electoral College Deliberation (Online)	Debt Deliberation (Face-to-Face)	Presidential Leadership Deliberation (Blended)
Luke	---	---	✓
Greg	---	✓	---
Helen	---	✓	---
Mary	---	---	✓
Irene	---	---	✓
Brigid	---	---	✓

Data Analysis

All data was analyzed following the conclusion of the course, at which point the students had graduated from high school. By delaying the analysis of data, I was better able to manage the duality of my role in this study. By maintaining a sense of ecological ethics, or the preservation of my professional role in the classroom, I improved my ability to serve the needs of the students as a teacher, while preventing any possible findings from data analysis to create a prejudice or bias that would not be present if I chose to conduct my study amongst other classes (Mills, 2007). One primary action taken to ensure students did not feel coerced to participate was the involvement of another teacher in the permission form collection, which demonstrated to the students that I did not have knowledge of who was participating. Through such actions, I strived to limit the reactivity of students to my role as the researcher and relieve any anxieties students had about their work being judged in a research context (Patton, 2002).

Once each data source had been analyzed and coded based on the aforementioned analysis methods, all of the data from each of the sources were compared to formulate a multi-layered approach to answering the research questions provided at the beginning of the chapter. While certain data sources aided in answering certain research questions more prominently than others, areas of vagueness or inconsistencies in one source in respect to answering a specific question were covered by findings generated from another source. Rather than following a specific or pre-designed template for identifying large findings or themes, I began my process by examining the data of each discussion as a singular case as I explored the context in which the case situated itself; once each case with its multiple data inputs had been comprehensively examined, I then compared each case to one another (Ely, et. al., 1991). When comparing the individual iterations' conclusions and data to the others, I sought to identify possible

commonalities as well as discrepancies between the discussions that could be developed further into themes, or divisions of information in which the data included is related to a central concept. I continuously readapted the themes as new insights arose throughout the process. (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2008)

During the analysis phase, I chose to treat the blended format deliberation in two separate manners. I initially focused on the study as a separate format from the online and face-to-face initially. Yet, through my analysis, I noticed similarities in its individual components and how each component related to its respective corresponding iteration. Therefore, I utilized data from the individual components of the blended discussion to support conclusions about face-to-face deliberations and online deliberations as well as to formulate a comprehensive view on how blended discussion differs from the other two formats. By utilizing this data to help inform about other iterations, it enabled me to develop a belief in the stability of my findings as well as incorporate more thorough description and support in my theoretical explanations (Johnson, 1997).

In the next chapter, themes and conclusions derived from the cross-comparison of the iterations and findings are described and organized in a presentable fashion that enhances the ability for audience understanding while maintaining a sense of truthfulness in describing what occurred. This organization runs counter to the traditional singular description of each case, yet provides extensive cross-case analysis as a means of exploring both the impact of format as well as the ability of students to participate in deliberation discussions (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002). The described findings and themes are also compared to previous conclusions of past studies.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Introduction

In this chapter, attention and detail are given to the primary research question: *How does students' group decision-making, when deliberating controversial political issues, differ between face-to-face, online, and blended deliberations?* To gain insight into this question, three class deliberations (one online, one face-to-face, and one blended) were observed and coded using established coding systems as well as a system of emergent coding. In addition to these transcripts, other data sources included the collection of student writing assignments before and after the discussions, interviewing select students, and the surveying of student beliefs about the varying formats through the use of an opinion poll. All sources of data collected throughout the study are utilized to provide a comprehensive response to the above research question. While each of the three deliberations occurred as a separate event and were analyzed as separate cases, the data they yielded along with the other data sources were also examined collectively providing insight to any reoccurring themes as well as helping indicate possible contrasts amongst the three forms.

Each of the three deliberations differed in both the format in which they occurred as well as the controversial political issue the students were exploring. The first observed deliberation for this study was an online discussion answering the question "What, if any, changes should be made to the Electoral College?" Following the first observed deliberation, the second deliberation studied was a face-to-face deliberation in which students grappled with the question "What should the United States Congress do to address the national debt?" After these two deliberations occurred, students participated in the final deliberation, a blended format in which

students first discussed the question online followed by a face-to-face dialogue that concluded the deliberation. The blended deliberation concentrated on the question “Which modern president best exemplifies presidential leadership?” In this chapter, the blended deliberation will be analyzed both as a separate format from face-to-face and online only formats, but will also be sub-divided into its two components, online and face-to-face. By subdividing the format, two separate components were connected to the other two deliberations, thus providing more evidence to support arguments regarding differences between online and face-to-face formats.

The findings from the analyses of these deliberation iterations are organized into categorical themes. The themes chosen to be focused on are variations in student performance, which may influence one’s decision to use one format over the other. The three primary variations include: student participation; student reasoning; and student engagement with one another. However, these analyses should not lead one to conclude that online, face-to-face, or blended is better than the other formats. Each format is different from the others in their inherent structure making it inappropriate to state that it is better than another format in which it shares little in common structurally (Warnick and Burbules, 2007).

Following a description of these differences, attention is given to selected variables that might influence the outcome or implementation of a deliberation, regardless of format. These variables include: the deliberation topic; the sense of need to derive a common position; and the role of the teacher. While these variables may not directly influence one’s preference between the three formats of hosting a deliberation, they do present themselves as considerations for the teacher to reflect upon as one constructs a deliberation for their class. In addition, these variables may influence student performance by shaping the student attitude toward the deliberation as a whole.

Differences between Formats

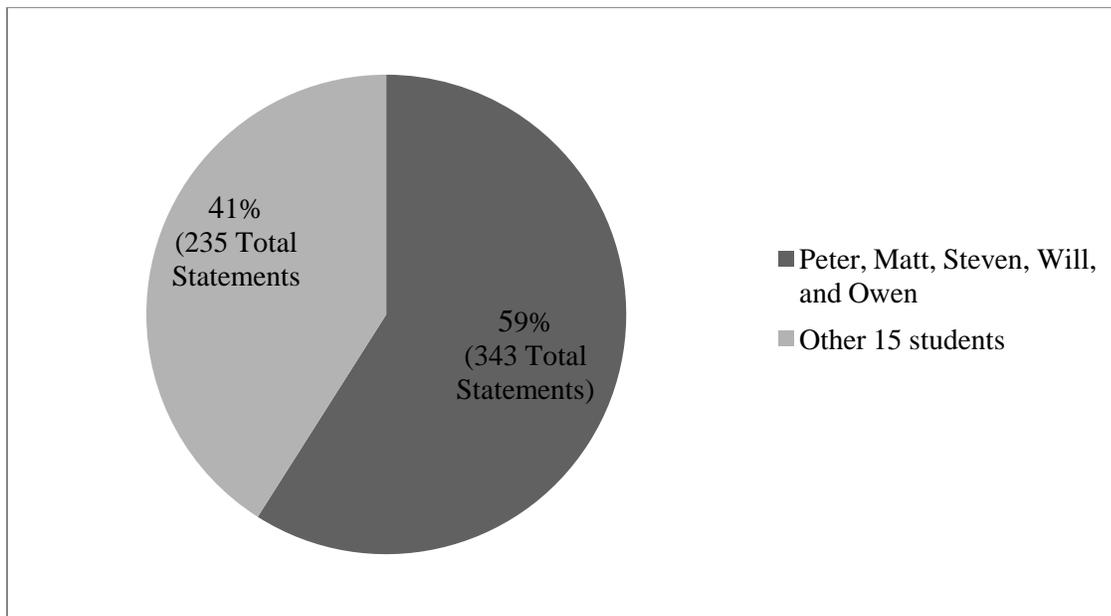
In comparing and contrasting the three formats, student participation, student reasoning, and peer interactions emerge as the principal points of divergence amongst the three formats. These factors, while the reported outcomes are limited to this study, are aspects of the deliberation experience a teacher should consider in deciding which specific format to utilize in their classroom.

Who Participates in Deliberations

As part of creating a democratic environment in the classroom, a teacher should strive to ensure that students feel or have the ability to participate equally in the classroom. This is also important to the success of a class deliberation; equal and widespread participation ensures that a variety of perspectives are heard and that all students are able to express their thoughts regarding the issue-at-hand. (Parker, 2010) In comparing the three deliberations, this democratic environment failed to fully emerge in each of the formats, yet the blended format provided a more balanced approach.

When studying participation patterns between the formats, the class appeared to have been dominated by a select minority of male students in face-to-face deliberations. By counting the number of statements students made, several of these male students exerted their voice throughout both formats much more than other students. Peter, Matt, Steven, Will, and Owen each contributed more than fifty observed statements during the three observed deliberations (see Image 2 for a comparison of student participation). While other students did participate, their participation was minimal in comparison to these five males.

Figure 3: Percentage Comparison of Contributions in Deliberations



Other students observed this domination of discussion as well. Brigid noted in her interview when asked if the majority of the class participated in face-to-face deliberations:

A group of four boys in my class who are extremely intelligent and they know politics. I respect them for that, but I also realize I might not be on their level. I still love listening to them, but it swings in that direction. For some people, it is really intimidating. I try not to let that happen and I try to give input when I can. But, it does create a barrier sometimes. You don't want to discourage them doing that though.

Brigid's comment recognizes the dual nature of the situation presented by such a monopolization of the discussion. For some students, to interrupt their peers, who were perceived to be very well-informed, can be a difficult social task and these students' alleged expertise may discourage students who feel they cannot participate at their intellectual level. Yet, the well-informed students' ability to speak fluently about the issue can be informative and at times models constructive political dialogue. Irene, in her interview, asserted that this domination took on a more negative character. Irene stated: "Most of our in-class discussions are dominated by like four people. The whole atmosphere is really, really tense. There are like four who are really

liberally biased unlike the class and the majority doesn't talk unless they have to." Irene believed that these students, and the bias she believed they had in common, helped produce an environment that limited the ability to develop a constructive deliberation environment.

The apparent control of the deliberation seems to be more apparent in the face-to-face format in which a limited time is available for students to participate; this is in contrast to online deliberations, which allow multiple people to post at the same time as well as to participate at all times of the day. In face-to-face deliberations, these five students often carried one discussion within themselves with little interruption from others. The following exchange illustrates the control that these few select students had on discussions (the contributions by the five dominating students are underlined):

Mr. Busbin: We are answering the following question, "What should Congress do about the debt?" We will open with the following question, "What is the urgency or current need for the nation to solve the budget crisis?" Do we need to solve this problem?

Matt: Interest payments on the debt will significantly increase once the economy picks up and the Federal Reserve raises interest rates

Will: We need to make sure foreign countries that we borrow a lot of money from doesn't have a say in our politics. If we end up borrowing a lot of money from China, Brazil, England, they get a say in what we do by saying threatening to stop sending us money to pay our debts. We would risk default.

Paul: That is not a problem with the debt though that is a problem with the growth rate of the debt. Plus I'm pretty sure we could always find other buyers.

Will: Do you know any other countries that would be interested with that type of money?

Paul: No, but it is mostly individuals who buy most of the debt

Will: I guess that is true but we would need a way to find individuals like Warren Buffett to buy up more of the debt.

Paul: Or, a lot of individuals to buy smaller portions.

Will: I don't think this should be the focus of our debate.

Mr. Busbin: I guess we could rephrase this another way as you are saying we owe a lot of money to other countries. So, is having debt a good or bad thing?

Steven: It can be both. Having too much debt is dangerous.

Brigid: Right now it is a bad thing as we have no answer for stopping its growth

Luke: I think we still have a way to go before it gets really bad. Maybe we can solve it now or later.

Chris: How bad do you think it has to be in order to get solved?

Luke: A lot more... I would say. Japan has a lot more GDP wise than we do. Twice of something percentage wise. I don't think we should go that far though.

Will: US can handle up to a healthy amount maybe 20 trillion. But, I don't want to encourage that. We could handle it, but we don't want to get there with the US economy.

Paul: When you said the US economy, do you mean now or when it is healthy and at peak level?

Will: Really right now. It is kind of expected for us to get better over the next ten years. So, I guess it could be now or when we get healthy. I guess it could either.

Mr. Busbin: Does our current level of spending and revenue need to be fixed?

Steven: Yeah, we need to do something about it. In terms of our deficit still growing right now and especially as soon as social security begins to pick up. If we don't do something now, we can be in a real fix in the future.

Peter: Or if we do something now, we will be in a worse fix in the future because in the past we had a growing economy. If you grow the economy enough, the debt becomes irrelevant. But, if you just concentrate on the debt, you get a much larger problem with the economy not moving or decreasing.

Greg: Right but what you are saying then is that the economy is the more important thing and we need to increase the debt.

Steven: If you cut spending though, wouldn't you be encouraging people to help the economy by spending more?

Peter: Why would this encourage people to help?

Matt: That is not necessarily true. When FDR was spending at record levels to fund WWII and when WWII ended economic growth exponentially increased even after government spending stopped. It is a logical fallacy to assume that when government spending stops, then economic growth stops.

Peter: That is not what I am saying. I am saying we need government spending right now because consumers are not spending. This is what happened during WWII.

Brigid: That is a good point. Government spending is needed right now because people are being really stingy about spending. There is no way for the economy to recover if money is not being put out there.

Steven: I think it would boost a lot of confidence about the US if we could show that we could do something about the debt. People would be more confident about investing and spending in the economy. It is pointless right now where we are with everyone in gridlock twiddling their thumbs.

Will: We are most likely to attract more foreign investment when we are high in debt. It would disappear with the devaluing of the dollar if we did something like print more money to pay off our debt. They will worry, God help us, if we were to default on our debt. Lately, foreign investment like car companies like Hyundai that opened the plant here a few years ago. Mercedes opened a new plant a few years ago. Foreign investors are very important to our economy with producing jobs and if they get scared about what might happen with our addressing the debt, they might be afraid to invest.

Paul: But what are their other options? Build a plant in Italy or China?

Matt: With the debt situation in Europe decaying currently with the Euro's existence being threatened, it was announced yesterday that European banks were going to buy up US bonds because the dollar has already been a safe haven despite to us its lackluster.

Mr. Busbin: If we stipulated that we must address the debt, what are some options policymakers have?

As illustrated above, in the first ten minutes of the debt deliberation, only a few other students spoke besides the five male students who largely controlled the face-to-face deliberations. Once this time had passed, these five students primarily framed the context of the issue without the input of the majority of discussion participants. Such disproportionate involvement limits the introduction of outside opinions, which may or may not diverge from the general opinion introduced by the few students who controlled the discussion. Thus, the evenness of participation in deliberations that is desired was lacking due to the heavy presence of a select minority of students; such unevenness detracts from the notion that students are free and equal participants in making decisions together through deliberation (Parker, 2010; Gutmann and Thompson, 2004) (see Table 9 for participation by student per discussion). Without a distributable amount of participation amongst the students, it is difficult to conclude that the class collectively took part in decision-making.

Table 8: Participation Amount amongst Students across the Deliberations

Student	Electoral College (Online)	National Debt (Face-to-Face)	Presidency (Online)	Presidency (Face-to-Face)	Total
Greg	9	5	2	13	29
Mark	6	2	0	2	10
Ruth	0	3	0	1	4
Chris	1	10	2	13	26
Owen	22	23	10	12	67
Lauren	2	0	3	1	6
Mary	2	3	2	3	10
Brigid	1	8	2	7	18
Adam	1	0	2	1	4
Peter	5	50	2	30	87
Monica	2	2	3	2	9
Irene	2	1	1	4	8
Helen	3	1	3	1	8
Jane	3	1	3	1	8
Matt	2	53	2	18	75
Steven	3	33	2	17	55
Will	2	42	2	13	59
John	1	ABSENT	2	13	16
Luke	7	19	4	13	43
Paul	0	33	0	16	49
Total	74	289	47	168	578

For some students, the absence of participation in face-to-face deliberations did not necessarily indicate that they were disengaged. When asked which format students learned the most from, students indicated that they learned the most from face-to-face discussion as well as they learned the most from others in face-to-face settings. In the survey, 16 of the 17 students indicated that their opinion was more likely to be influenced in face-to-face discussions. The data reaffirms previous studies that indicate students find they learn more from face-to-face settings (Meyer, 2007; Larson and Keiper, 2002). Several students in their interviews noted that their silence during face-to-face deliberations was indicative of their reflecting on others' opinions. Brigid stated: "You hear things that you may not have come to a conclusion about previously...that can lead to many other better thoughts." Mary expressed similar beliefs about face-to-face deliberations; she believed that "hearing ideas discouraged by others made you think those ideas didn't make sense any more. Hearing other opinions made you think more about your own." For some students, the opportunity to hear the discussion, as opposed to participate in the discussion, was a perceived advantage for their learning.

When examining participation rates, the online deliberation provided a more fair and equitable platform for participation in comparison to face-to-face deliberations (see Table 9). Both numerically and demographically, the participation rates appeared to be more balanced. In the face-to-face deliberations, not a single female spoke more than eight times during a deliberation; yet, ten male students spoke more than eight times each during at least one face-to-face deliberation. When examining the average amount of contributions per student based on gender, the differences truly emerge amongst the formats. For the online Electoral College deliberation, the male students posted an average of 4.83 contributions per student, similar to the female average of 2.71 contributions, which made up 20 percent of the total discussion; in the

online component of the presidency deliberation, male students posted an average of 2.50 times and female students had a 2.13 contribution average. These averages contrast greatly with those of the face-to-face deliberations. During the debt deliberation, female students spoke an average of 2.71 times, making up only a meager 6.5 percent of the discussion, while male students on average contributed 24.55 times; the face-to-face element of the blended deliberation saw a similar divide with females speaking an average of 2.50 times and males producing an average of 12.3 contributions per student. In examining the percentage differences between the two aspects of the blended discussion, female students (8 of the 20 students) made up 36 percent of the total online contributions while only contributing 12 percent of the total face-to-face contributions. While both settings saw the male students contributing more, the discrepancy between the differences in contributions narrowed considerably in the online format.

Other more individualistic demographic differences were also noted. Mark, a student originally from South Korea, contributed significantly during the Electoral College online deliberation making up eight percent of the total discussion; he forgot to do so for the online presidency deliberation. Yet, Mark remained primarily silent throughout the face-to-face deliberations; he contributed twice in these face-to-face deliberations, which was the minimum requirement. Adam, who had a speech impediment, also participated more online than in the face-to-face format, yet in a more limited fashion than Mark. Adam and Mark, for who speaking publicly may have been more difficult as compared to other students, were able to participate online without any worries about being ostracized or judged for their limited speech abilities. Like the findings of Merryfield (2000) and Yu (2009), the online setting for this class may have served as an equalizer in which students participated on a more balanced basis.

Compared to the skewed participation numbers in the face-to-face deliberations, the class's online discussions revealed a balanced pattern of participation. Of the five students who controlled most of the face-to-face deliberations, only one of these students, Owen, contributed at a much higher rate than that of his peers as his contributions made up 29.7 percent of the Electoral College deliberation and 25.5 percent of the online segment of the presidency discussion; in addition, the asynchronous nature of online deliberations prevented his heavy participation from restricting the ability of others to participate. In the online deliberations, students spread their contributions throughout the course of the discussion. They did not limit themselves to posting either at the very beginning or the end. This is unlike the face-to-face format in which these individuals either injected their voice towards the end of the deliberation or upon prompting by the teacher, such as a direct question towards them with the intent of soliciting their participation. For example, Lauren did not participate in the debt deliberation and only spoke at the conclusion of the face-to-face portion of the presidency deliberation when each student spoke about which president they preferred. Yet, Lauren posted on the second as well as the last day of the Electoral College online deliberation; for the online portion of the presidency deliberation, she posted the second day and twice on the fourth day. Greg stated that he felt it was easier to become engaged online because "just the in-person one is harder to communicate like there is not something where you can just post and not worry about being interrupted." By being able to access the discussion forum and simply press "reply" once they have typed out their statement, these students are able to insert their voice without the social pressures of the face-to-face deliberations.

Students also expressed the time constraints of face-to-face deliberation as a factor in shaping their participation. Greg, Helen, and Luke each asserted that the online setting provided

them a mental advantage in participating because of the asynchronous nature. Greg stated about face-to-face deliberations: “In-person factor makes everyone take turns speaking and that can take up a lot of time... You are on the spot, issues change quickly and some people don’t have enough time to think about them.” Irene, who did not enjoy face-to-face deliberations, stated that the difference in her enjoyment was due to “You can think about what you say before you type it out, which helps someone like me who doesn’t like debating.” Helen, in response to a question about why she felt online was better than face-to-face, said that she had “more time to collect my thoughts and put them together.” She also recognized that online allowed her “to look up on the Internet if you needed more facts.” For Helen, the asynchronous nature and availability of a reference source gave her the ability to develop an appropriate response without the time-sensitive nature of face-to-face deliberations. Luke, who participated a great amount in class, even found that online deliberations were more appealing due to the time provided to generate one’s thoughts. He stated, “I am not very good in big groups. I like to be able to sit and think out my thoughts before I type them.” For some students, the face-to-face deliberations had a fast-paced nature that at certain times limited their ability to participate.

Yet, while more students participated in the online discussions, the total amount of participation overall was not equal to that of face-to-face deliberations. In the online Electoral College deliberation, six of the 20 students contributed two times, the minimum amount required, and six other students contributed one or less times; thus, 60 percent of the class only met the minimal participation requirements in comparison to the 63 percent who contributed more than required in the face-to-face debt discussion. The online portion of the presidency deliberation revealed a similar amount of limited participation: ten students contributed twice and four students provided only one or less times, thus 70 percent of the class met at most the

minimum requirements.. For example, Peter only posted a total of seven times online (five for the Electoral College and two for the online portion of the presidency deliberation) but spoke eighty times during the two face-to-face deliberations. Peter's immense involvement in the face-to-face deliberations demonstrates that he often has something to say, yet this does not occur online. Another student, Paul, never posted online for deliberations; yet, Paul spoke a total of 49 times during the face-to-face deliberations. Paul stated to me, the teacher, that he "doesn't do homework," when asked why he speaks in class but does nothing online. Through reflecting on the minimal or nonexistent participation of several students who participated frequently in class discussion, one observes how the social and in-class nature of face-to-face deliberations may spark increased participation in contrast to the online format that requires students to remember to participate amongst their other concerns outside of school. Brigid, discussing her perceptions of engagement online, stated, "Online seemed more like an obligation for a grade. Not everyone will read it." Brigid's statement reveals two weaknesses with the online format: the sense that it was more of an assignment than a means of student engagement and the structural limitation of reading many contributions as opposed to listening to peers speaking. Chen and Looi (2007) as well as Larson and Keiper (2002) warn in the conclusions from their studies that online postings may overwhelm students, thus resulting in a greater sense of burden as expressed by the students, which was expressed by Brigid. Ten of the 17 students surveyed indicated that they enjoyed face-to-face discussions more than online, perhaps revealing a belief that face-to-face was part of class work unlike online deliberations which had to be done outside of school adding more time to homework. Another student's participation online clearly indicated his contribution was purely to fulfill the requirements for posting. In his second post for the online portion of the presidency deliberation, Adam posted: "I have nothing to change about my point of the ideal

president for me.” Adam’s statement fulfilled the task of posting at least twice, but did nothing to further the deliberation or demonstrate any understanding or engagement with the material that had been posted for several nights following his first initial post. One question that arose in my mind regarding these perceptions was whether there existed a disconnect in purpose with the students regarding the assignment. Similar to Ellis, Goodyear, Prosser, and O’Hara (2006), the participation patterns and commentary regarding the online format did not indicate that students found a deeper purpose or benefit to the deliberations. The minimal participation online by some demonstrates how these deliberations may be perceived as more of an assignment rather than an engaging and enlightening activity.

The blended format’s two components, if analyzed separately, mirrored the general participation trends evident in the previous deliberations: the majority of students contributed equally online, but a minority of students controlled the preponderance of the face-to-face deliberation. Yet, by incorporating an online portion prior to the face-to-face deliberation, more students put forth their views for future consideration, which if the deliberation was face-to-face only then this might not have been possible. For instance, Jane, Helen, and Lauren each contributed three times online thus making up 19.1 percent of that segment of the presidency deliberation but only spoke once each in class for a total of 1.7 percent of the discussion, which only occurred when the students took a poll at the end of the deliberation regarding which president each person preferred. Their online contributions helped to establish relevant criteria for assessing presidential leadership, which included the following selected comments from their participation:

Lauren: I agree...that Nixon getting on Mount Rushmore is not feasible at all. The American public would not like a "crook" being on one of their national monuments. I also agree with Chris how all of these presidents have flaws. I think that the president that goes up on Mount Rushmore

should be overall good. We can't scrutinize everything he did. I think when thinking feasibility wise JFK and FDR are the two that the public would be fine having.

Helen: @Lauren – while I agree that JFK and FDR were both admirable leaders, I would have a hard time voting for either to have the next spot on Mount Rushmore seeing that both had extra marital affairs. I believe that a great leader not only acts appropriately in public life but also at home. An often quoted definition of character is how we act when no one is watching – I think Reagan best embodies this principle.

Jane: @Helen, I'm going to have to disagree with you on that point. I do not see how a President's private life influences the way that he governs. FDR and JFK were good leaders, and were able to make great changes in the United States during their times. I would personally vote for FDR to be on Mount Rushmore because of the long lasting programs he created for our society.

Jane: @Steven I agree, the public's opinion does influence the way that a president governs. However, if the president is able to keep their personal life private, it really has little effect on their goals and ability to accomplish such. If their personal life does become public, there is a chance that public opinion could change, but this is not always bad for them (such as Clinton's scandal).

Lauren: Yes, if the president is seen more about the scandals then he isn't that great of a president, but just because he has sexual affairs doesn't mean he is a bad president. JFK was a good president who had tons of affairs. The affairs only cause trouble when they are publicized and even still, the only influences these affairs have are on the public's opinion, and this does not always have a negative effect.

These three females engaged in a line of discussion online regarding presidential character, which helped bring greater focus to the question of whether personal morals and the private life decisions of presidents should be considered in assessing their performance. This participation carried a far greater impact on the discussion in comparison to each of their single contributions in the face-to-face component. Their online contributions provided insight into an important element of the topic, thus enhancing the quality and depth of the deliberation. When discussing her impressions of the blended deliberation, Irene stated, “The presidency one was a lot better online because everyone had something to say.” Had the online opportunity not been offered, these female students may have not felt compelled to shape the deliberation by injecting their views, thus limiting them to the universal participation component at the end of the face-to-face deliberation. Yet, by adding the face-to-face portion, students were able to provide additional commentary bringing a greater sense of depth and exploration to the topic. While only 47 contributions were posted online, students spoke 168 times in class, which helped generate a

greater sense of resolution to the topic by giving more time and attention to the question. Luke, in his interview, commented about the blended format in comparison to the other two: “Not really an opinion different from the other two. I guess it was good that we kept talking about the question for an extended length of time. More time given to think of it.” Through simply lengthening the discussion through the addition of another component, it gave the class more time to examine the topic, which Luke saw as advantageous for his own thinking about the issue. This experience mirrors that of Guiller (2008), who found that in blended discussions students were able to put forth many views online and then focus in class on either supporting or challenging the prevailing views. By examining these different characteristics of the blended deliberation, the class’ experience demonstrated that the online portion provided a greater opportunity for more students to participate, but through the addition of the face-to-face component, certain students were able to engage more frequently adding depth to the discussion.

Overall, participation rates and patterns amongst the formats varied considerably. Both the online and face-to-face only deliberations lacked a sense of “shared inquiry,” or the participation of all students in seeking a decision together through an equitable exchange of viewpoints (Parker, 2003). The online deliberation, while participation rates were more even, saw some students failing to participate or participate frequently as they either did not remember the assignment or saw the deliberation as merely an assignment, thus requiring little effort. In face-to-face deliberations, participation rates reflected an off balance monopolization by a select few male students, which others saw as intimidating. In addition, students felt that the fast-pace nature of face-to-face deliberations presented an obstacle to participation, while the asynchronous nature and available information on the Internet allowed them to participate more comfortably online.

Critical Reasoning

Varying elements or forms of critical reasoning, such as using one's personal experience or asking questions for clarification, were tracked in each of the different deliberations. Using a coding system (Table 4 and Appendix G), each deliberation transcript was analyzed extensively to derive a comprehensive picture of the range and style of thinking that students employed when deliberating about controversial political issues as part of a classroom assignment. This analysis helps develop an understanding of the ability of the students to thoroughly comprehend and engage with the issue that was presented, thus helping address the question of whether students are capable of dealing with complex, controversial issues. The tallies from each deliberation, with the blended deliberation divided into face-to-face and online, are represented in Table 10. When examining the differences between the formats in terms of frequency in elements of critical reasoning, it is important to note that face-to-face deliberations had a much higher number of student contributions as a whole, thus the higher number of critical reasoning instances is partly due to the greater number of contributions to be studied. Thus, one cannot conclude that one behavior or form of reasoning was more likely to occur in one format over the other by simply examining which format produced a greater number of instances reflecting that behavior or reasoning.

Table 9: Frequency of Critical Reasoning in Class Deliberations

Type of Critical Reasoning	Electoral College Online	National Debt Face-to-Face	Presidential Leadership Online	Presidential Leadership Face-to-Face
CC+ (Recognizing Contradiction)	1	4	0	2
CD+ (Disagreement)	5	18	7	13
CR- (Challenging through Rudeness)	8	7	4	5
JC- (Noncommittal)	0	2	0	8
JC+ (Justifying through consequences)	7	25	1	9
JP- (Irrelevant Proof)	0	0	0	0
JP+ (Justifying with Proof)	9	25	9	39
JS- (Providing No Justification)	7	16	6	20
JS+ (Justifying Solution)	17	25	8	28
L- (Repetition of Information)	2	1	0	4
LA- (Agreement without Development)	8	1	1	1
LI+ (Identifying Dilemma)	3	5	4	7
LO+ (Outlining Conversation)	2	9	0	2
LS+ (Stipulation)	0	5	1	4
LT+ (Transition)	0	4	0	0
NI+ (New Idea for Deliberation)	1	5	2	0
NP- (Repeated Problem-Related Information)	0	1	1	1

NP+ (New Problem-Related Information)	2	14	6	6
NQ- (Rejecting Ideas)	3	7	1	2
NQ+ (Welcoming New Ideas)	1	0	0	0
NS- (Superficial Acceptance of Solution)	1	0	1	0
NS+ (New Solution)	3	22	3	2
O- (Prejudices and Assumptions)	0	0	1	0
OA- (Inappropriate Analogy)	0	0	0	0
OA+ (Appropriate Analogy)	4	2	0	2
OC+ (Outside Information-Course Related)	3	5	2	2
OE+ (Outside Information-Personal Experience)	1	3	0	0
OF- (Failure to Produce Support)	1	0	0	0
OM+ (Outside Material)	3	6	2	0
OQ- (Rejecting Outside Information)	0	1	0	0
OQ+ (Welcoming Outside Information)	0	0	0	0
QA- (Irrelevant Question)	1	0	0	0
QC+ (Questioning for Clarification)	2	15	4	5
QP+ (Questioning for New Exploration)	3	2	6	6
R- (Irrelevancy)	5	13	1	12
W- (Narrowing Deliberation)	1	13	2	7
W+ (Widening Deliberation)	2	5	3	0

The most evident form of reasoning found throughout the deliberations, regardless of format, were examples of students justifying their position, providing proof or examples to verify their stance, and outlining the consequences. Students were frequently seeking to either prove or support their position on a topic. For example, during a component of the debt deliberation on privatizing Medicare, Will argued:

We could get the doctors themselves to reduce the costs here. There was a report recently that the bankers and big businessmen were not making the most money in the nation, it was actually the doctors. As Paul was saying earlier a few days ago, the people with insurance do not really notice these changes, but those without insurance who have to get these procedures notice the prices are insane. The doctors can charge however much they like. If we privatized the system, we could possibly get the costs under control.

Will's statement is an example of students incorporating information, from a student in class and a news source, which they have learned previously to defend their position. Like Will, Helen used examples she has learned to justify her position. She wrote in the online component of the presidency deliberation:

...while I agree that JFK and FDR were both admirable leaders, I would have a hard time voting for either to have the next spot on Mount Rushmore seeing that both had extramarital affairs. I believe that a great leader not only acts appropriately in public life but also at home. An oft quoted definition of character is how we act when no one is watching-I think Reagan best embodies this principle.

She used examples of other presidents' behavior to justify her own belief that Reagan was the best modern president. She also incorporated a common character principle to add a sense of morality to her judgment. Monica utilized the possible consequences of adopting a certain solution to justify her position in the online Electoral College deliberation. She wrote:

...if direct voting is obtainable by all means I think that is the best option. It is obviously the most democratic and best represents what the people want. The government's job is to serve the people and with the EC that is not being done. And if we are going to take the time to reform the election system (which is needed)-why change to something like a proportional plan which will just be as open to corruption. You might as well completely get rid of the middle man and go to direct voting.

Monica's statement reflects her consideration of what the different plans would look like once implemented, thus leading her to be able to make a judgment on which reform was better. In looking at Will, Helen, and Monica's example statements, their reasoning suggests that the students were capable of identifying a position and defending that position with some form of justification, whether it be by making a simple moral based judgment, providing proof to illustrate their beliefs, or laying out possible advantageous consequences of implementing a specified policy solution. The heavy presence of declarative statements does not differ greatly from observations made by other researchers (Larson and Keiper, 2002; Guiller, 2008; Brice, 2002) Yet, this presence does not necessarily indicate that these students are thoroughly capable of collectively deliberating and producing a solution to a complex, controversial political issue question in the context of a limited discussion confined by the length of a class session.

Not all discussion contributions were defended through the inclusion of evidence or other means of argumentation and proof. An example of this is illustrated by the following comment from Will during the face-to-face component of the presidency deliberation: "Well, I think Nixon was a pretty horrible guy." In this statement, Will made a strong judgment, but provided no evidence or reasoning to help support his opinion. For the debt deliberation, there were 16 instances of students providing an opinion with no supportive justification; in the face-to-face component of the presidency deliberation, the number of occurrences rose to twenty. These incidences far outnumber the total of similar occasions online, which saw only 13 contributions in which students stated an opinion but failed to generate support. This trend may be supported by the beliefs expressed previously by certain students about their preferences for online deliberations; as explained previously, some students preferred participating online as it gave them the opportunity to develop their thoughts prior to producing their contribution for the

deliberation. In addition, when online, students may be more focused on producing contributions that were task-oriented as opposed to social talk or contributions that failed to meet provided criteria; such behavior would corroborate with the perception by students that online discussions were more “assignment-like” as opposed to an engaging activity.

Throughout each deliberation, several forms of critical reasoning were largely absent. For instance, students seldom sought to stipulate a definition or fact to help further the discussion; rather, there were occurrences in which student discussions would hamper the progress of the deliberation due to the rehashing of a topic or narrowing of the discussion. The ability to stipulate or accept a stipulation would have greatly aided the students in their efforts to reach a collective decision or to move the deliberation forward when students became obsessively focused on certain matters, sometimes to the detriment of the deliberation goal. One example from the presidency deliberation illustrates the difficulty students experienced in resolving issues embedded in resolution of the question posed to them. In this deliberation, students resurrected in the face-to-face setting a topic that had been briefly discussed online. Luke, after having made it known online his opposition to international involvement and his support for communism, began to sarcastically support Reagan. For the students, this support was quickly noted and initiated a complex effort to try to understand how Luke and Owen viewed international relations. The following dialogue ensued:

Steven: That is kind of why I like Reagan. Not necessarily because I agree with his positions, but because he operated out of principle. He operated in tough times and passed a lot of legislation, had a lot of foreign successes like starting the collapse of the Berlin Wall, and he had a good image, which was lucky for him.

Luke: Yeah, I vote for Reagan. He asserted our dominance in South America, like Nicaragua. He also made the economy really good.

Will: Well, there you go with the exact problem you described. A nationalist or adherent to American exceptionalism would be all about that, but someone who is an internationalist, such as yourself, should be against this.

Luke: Is it safe to say most of us here are nationalists?

Will: [laughing] Is anyone a communist?

Mr. Busbin: There is an apparent definitional conflict here. What does it mean to have a nationalist viewpoint or foreign policy versus that of an internationalist? For instance, when thinking about internationalist, we could look at Jimmy Carter and say he introduced the concept of human rights into our foreign policy goals; therefore, under internationalism, should we look at him and consider him one of our better leaders? Nationalist foreign policy could also be called a realist foreign policy. Internationalism could also be called an idealist.

Peter: Nationalist means you are improving the conditions and power of your country above all others. And, as an internationalist, you would be improving the conditions of the world. You don't really care if it helps your country or not. You just care if it helps certain ideals. Like if you are an internationalist, you believe in spreading democracy even if a country adopting such might then become hostile towards your country. As a nationalist, you would only be concerned about if that dictator or that democracy likes your nation.

Owen: I don't think you can equate liberal democracy with internationalism. I don't think that is a fair comparison.

Peter: There are plenty of internationalists who aren't communists or socialists.

Owen: No, I know that. I'm just saying you shouldn't equate them.

Greg: Yeah, under your definition, there might be an internationalist who wants to spread fascism.

Peter: Well, I was just giving an example of one country caring about democracy and thinking it is good for the world. But, with my example, a nationalist might spread democracy only because it better suits his own country.

Greg: If there were an internationalist from a democracy, then yes.

Will: [laughing] An internationalist fascist?

Paul: So, what is the difference between internationalism and thinking that everyone should have the same viewpoint that you do?

Peter: Well, I suppose you could say internationalism is like if you provide substantial aid to a developing country rather than using that money for your own infrastructure. Like how Sweden or Norway does.

Paul: But, that is with stipulations like what we talked about in AP Economics. Like with the example you gave, they might be giving aid because they want to spread democracy to a dictatorship.

Steven: Yeah, that example is like the problem with internationalism, spreading the ideals of your country into another instead of simply just helping. You think your ideas are good and best for everyone so you are spreading them around. You feel countries will benefit.

Paul: So, this is really just another approach to exceptionalism.

Teacher: What are the characteristics we would see or look for if there was an internationalist president? What actions would they take? Owen, you have talked about this a lot. What do you believe a president must do to qualify as an internationalist?

Owen: Within the framework that we are speaking of, I don't think it is possible.

The above excerpt from the presidency deliberation demonstrates the length that the class went to as a means of trying to understand what was meant by Owen and Luke in their interpretation of a president's international relations approach. Yet, both Owen and Luke remained either unable or unwilling to help resolve the definitional conflict. Luke's sarcastic initiation of the discussion and unwillingness to entertain a solution prevented the class from either truly understanding his opinion, the distinctions trying to be made between national or international focused foreign policy, or from moving quickly into a topic that other students seemed more eager or able to engage in discussing. After several more comments, the discussion was refocused by the teacher through the following redirection:

Okay, we came to this because we were talking about commander-in-chief and chief diplomat. If we can, let's move off of this subject and come back to it if we need to. What about within the country? What president did the most domestically? Which modern president helped the domestic populace the most?

The redirection occurred to help move the discussion away from a topic that appeared to the teacher that it would not resolve itself through the students and the increasing focus on the definition distracted from the larger discussion goal. Rather than stipulate an answer, it was often someone changing the topic or posing a new question that allowed the class to move forward.

Utilizing stipulations in the discussion as a means of aiding the class in moving forward in the discussion would have also assisted in lessening the impact of discussions that experienced a narrowing of the topic. When students did utilize a stipulation, this occurred primarily during face-to-face deliberations with only one instance online during the first half of the presidency deliberation. Compared to online deliberations, the face-to-face deliberations experienced several examples of students narrowing the discussion to pursue a divergent topic or issue that detracted from the overall question or focus of the deliberation. In the debt deliberation, the following exchange occurred:

Paul: It seems to me that social security and Medicare are big problems, but long-term problems. We have short-term problems right now like fixing the economy. If we focused on the debt, we would further trash the economy. With the economy fixed, then we have an additional and great tool to fix the debt with.

Owen: Well, I think you need to plan for the long-term somewhat because you need to plan for how much debt you can handle. When you fix the debt, you have to consider into the solution how will our debt be contained in poor times like now. You say it will be fixed, but we know there will eventually be another downturn.

Matt: Are you suggesting another Keynesian stimulus plan? Like what was passed earlier.

Paul: If it would help.

Matt: Well, unemployment still didn't get fixed. The Obama administration promised to contain and fix unemployment, but they haven't.

Peter: They were also stopped by Republicans in the House and Senate that kept them from accomplishing what they really wanted to do.

Matt: They still passed their stimulus bills. They could have spent the money whichever way they wanted to.

Peter: They wanted to pass other job stimulus packages.

Matt: Well, what I am saying is that they passed their original package with no effect except a rise in the debt.

Peter: It was actually targeted more for big banks and not job creation.

While Paul initially proposed the concept of increasing spending as a means of stimulating economic growth, the discussion quickly narrowed into a disagreement between Matt and Peter on the effectiveness of President Obama's initial stimulus package. Matt and Peter's willingness to engage in resolving such a minute point in relation to the larger question reveals an inability of them to reason about what is and what is not necessary information in relation to addressing the controversial political issue. Similar exchanges occurred at different points in both face-to-face deliberations, with some being more pertinent to the topic and others more off-issue; yet, similar divergences were not seen online. Such occurrences also impacted participation by other students by taking away time that may have been used by other students. Students did not engage in a narrowing of the discussion online; rather, this only occurred in the face-to-face deliberations. With narrowing of the discussion occurring only in face-to-face discussion, it reveals the limitations of real time critical discussion in that students are trying to talk through an issue in a

social context, yet may not give great thought to what they are saying or consider how their contribution builds on the class' goal or experience.

While used occasionally in the online Electoral College deliberation, students rarely incorporated analogies to enhance their arguments. They also struggled to connect their personal experience to help illustrate a point during the deliberation, except for Mark who used his Korean background to help establish international connections. Despite having recently immigrated to the United States, Mark demonstrated his familiarity with the Electoral College by stating: "I have read books about American history and politics when I was in Korea. The book is critical about Electoral College system, which, for most foreigners, seems absurd and confusing." At one point, Mark established a personal connection to serve as a rebuttal to another student's statement.

Helen: I challenge everyone who is in favor of a direct vote to go walk around Wal-Mart on any given day and just observe the clientele there. After doing this, ask yourself if you want the vote of Bubba, the trucker hat wearing, tobacco chewing fellow with an IQ of 75 to directly affect the election of our next president.

Mark: IQ system does not properly reflect the people's education or political awareness. South Korea has the highest IQ average (106), which only Hong Kong and Singapore can match with, while US has 98. I understand Helen's note that people with low IQ should not affect the serious election. But using IQ score would not fit on politics. Why should people with low education and low political awareness not be a main body of politics? I challenge on Elitist view. I understand that early history of America is based on Elitist and educated group; however, current America has many educated people. I don't understand if you are simply attacking direct vote system for people's profiles. If you are criticizing the direct vote option, I want to know more reasons regarding democracy and benefits of representation of majority and commoners.

Mark's engagement with Helen's comment illustrates his ability to make sense of American government issues through relating them to his own experience and nationality; however, Mark only demonstrated this behavior online as he rarely spoke in face-to-face discussions. Mark used his own background to produce statistics that challenged Helen's argument and sought for others to reconsider the "redneck" analogy. Yet, such thinking was rare, which is unfortunate as its absence demonstrated that students found it difficult to relate their personal lives and experiences

to the topics being discussed. In addition, it demonstrates that the students struggled to identify correlating issues or historical examples to illustrate or enhance arguments being made.

In considering other forms of reasoning that were largely absent in the discussions, it was unusual for students to move beyond what they had learned or received from class and incorporate new information for both the online and face-to-face deliberations. Students, except in a few rare instances, failed to attempt to introduce new information or reference factual information given to them in class. At one point during the face-to-face debt deliberation, Peter introduced some polling statistics he had researched independently. Will aggressively challenged this introduction when he asked “Where did you get that information from? I just cannot see the upper middle class and the upper class ever supporting this.” This challenge revealed that efforts to bring in new material, which could enhance the discussion, might be quickly dismissed by opponents of the idea in which the outside information is supporting. Will demonstrated in his attack how some students in the class antagonistically challenged new perspectives or information that threatened their own perception of the issue; this antagonism threatened the class climate that I wished to build for the deliberations to help generate honest and open discussion. In witnessing this opposition, other students may have been discouraged from introducing their own research out of fear of receiving similar questioning. While I chose not to intervene in this case, I had the occasion presented in this situation to reinforce a positive behavior by complimenting Peter’s efforts, which may have led to future occurrences by other students.

From a teacher’s perspective, it was surprising to not see any additional information being introduced online. In past years using online deliberations, students would mention statistics and information that they found online; they would sometimes include the URL address

as a means of reinforcing their efforts to provide validated information. The failure to produce such new information online may reinforce how some students interpreted online deliberation as an assignment that did not necessitate excessive engagement. Yet, it may also have been a behavior resulting from an extension of the perceived attack that occurred within the face-to-face debt discussion.

Through examining accumulated coded contributions and careful observations of the deliberations, one procedural criterion that was welcomed was the active listening present in face-to-face deliberations. While this was not part of the pre-developed coding system, continued analysis of the transcripts revealed this behavior to be present. Students demonstrated that they were actively listening as seen through the limited instances of repeating information without any type of additional exploratory effort and efforts to summarize what had been said previously. Such positive behavior contradicts many concerns expressed in previous literature by teachers who feel such discussion should be avoided due to the possibility of student inability to respect one another that would distract from the class goal (Hahn, 1999; Phillips, 1997). Building on the trend of active listening, students also outlined and summarized the preceding discussion several times in the face-to-face deliberations, more often so than in the online format. For instance, in one line of discussion during the debt deliberation, Chris interrupted the discussion to summarize what he believed the major point to be of the current topic of argument:

Paul: With taxes, there is a lot of ethical issues. With taxes, you are basically being mugged by the government. It's like give us your money or we will use force against you.

Peter: Except that the community in large agrees to some extent it is okay.

Luke: I don't think what you are saying is part of our collective assumptions or should even be considered in our discussion.

Paul: My point is that taxing rich people who are more rich than other people...isn't it unfair to take more money from them when they got that money legitimately based on individuals' free and legal transactions?

Luke: No

Greg: They may have gotten that money legitimately, but they represent a far larger portion of the nation's income and therefore they are a greater asset to the nation's economy than most. They should have to pay more as they serve as that asset.

Chris: I think what he is saying is pretty clear. Just because you make a lot of money and you work for it doesn't mean you should have to pay more. There is just not a lot of logic there.

While the students were actively disagreeing with Paul and his reasoning, Chris stepped forth into the discussion outlining what he perceived to be Paul's central point. In the same deliberation, another occurrence demonstrates that students were able to recognize and summarize the arguments and statements put forth by their peers:

Will: I consider that as more everybody pays the same percentile. That is more along my idea of fairness. If we are building a project or something, we each contribute an equal amount. That is along my own moral position. But, what I think is best for the nation is a more regressive tax system.

Peter: How is it fair that someone may not contribute much at all while another contributes everything they have?

Will: Twenty percent is not that much.

Peter: Yes it is especially if you are living paycheck to paycheck. If you are poor, you need X amount of food, if you are rich you need X amount of food. These amounts are equal, but the rich are going to have a lot leftover and never worry about the choice to go hungry.

Will: Are you implying then that the wealthy and rich buy the same quality of food?

Peter: No, but food is never going to be so high in price to hurt the rich.

Owen: Peter makes a good point that there is a certain threshold that the poor must get to just to pay for food, house, whatever and to say that the twenty percent is the same is unfair because that twenty percent would be used differently between the rich and the poor.

In this example, Owen concludes the line of discussion by summarizing and agreeing with Peter's point. Like the previous example, a student was able to insert himself in the discussion to provide a more concise as well as insightful means of emphasizing argument with previous statements. The active listening evident in the face-to-face discussions reflects similar findings from Meyer (2007), who found that students tended to be able to recall more details from face-to-face discussions as opposed to online discussions. The active listening in the face-to-face

setting helps corroborate statements explored earlier that some students find reading through the online contributions tedious and burdensome.

Another procedural component that appeared to be predominantly absent, to the betterment of the discussion, was irrelevant commentary, or discussion that did not serve the topic-at hand in a useful manner. If students engaged in irrelevant commentary, it mirrored the topic that was being discussed in each instance, rather than being on a topic such as a recent football game or a homework assignment. For example, while discussing defense spending, Paul stated, “While it is useful to extort stuff from all of the other countries in the world, I think we don’t need as many bases as we currently have. We can cut some and still extort as well as we have in the past.” This irrelevant commentary simply served a purpose of injecting humor or sarcasm into the discussion; thus, while not serving the deliberation in the best means possible, Paul was mentally on task during the deliberation. Other examples of irrelevant commentary sometimes were statements about the nature of the discussion; for example, Steven posted in the online deliberation regarding the Electoral College, “This is making my head hurt :(.” Students tended to produce more irrelevant commentary in the face-to-face deliberations as opposed to the online setting, thus reinforcing the social interconnectedness of face-to-face deliberations. Overall, students stayed on task with very few momentary injections of humorous topics or statements that were simply observing the path of the discussion.

Generally, few key differences emerged between the formats in relation to critical reasoning. Echoing past research, students primarily focused on producing reasoning that reinforced their own beliefs or challenged those of others (Guiller, 2008; Larson and Keiper, 2002). Such deliberative discussion revolves around what Brice (2002) labels “I language,” which she believes is an act by students to seek reaffirmation for their own ideas by peers. With

the assertiveness of many students, Brice's label could certainly apply to many of the statements. Throughout both formats, students sought to make contributions that reasserted their own beliefs or attacked those of others. An important dissimilarity between the formats that was observable was the greater likelihood of students putting forth an opinion or statement without support in face-to-face deliberations. Another evident difference was the narrowing focus of discussions in face-to-face settings. Both of these differences are attributable to the social connectedness and immediate nature of the setting. With the sense of immediacy in providing contributions in the face-to-face formats as expressed by some students, students may be more prone to reacting without reflection on their reasoning or more likely to become engaged with another student as one would in a normal conversation. Some forms of reasoning were notable for their absence, which had they been utilized or present may have enhanced the deliberations; students largely failed to incorporate new information, connect the deliberation to personal experiences or analogous concepts, and use stipulations appropriately to curb the narrowing of discussion. Yet, the students' performance is commendable in that their focus was largely maintained in both settings in remaining on topic and the lack of repetition of information. Other forms of reasoning are explored below in relation to how they help characterize the interaction amongst students with one another.

Peer-to-Peer Interaction

Student interaction amongst their peers emerged as another significant difference amongst the formats. Student engagement with one another during deliberations reveals the extent to which the process is a collective experience. By listening to other students and reflecting on the diverse opinions, the process of deliberation creates a "public" or environment in which people work together to solve a shared problem (Parker, 2003). Therefore, I analyzed

the deliberation transcripts and other collected evidence for indications of students engaging with one another's contributions; thus, attention was given to determine to what extent a "public" had been created. Several key differences emerged amongst the formats regarding student interaction; once again, the blended format, if examined in its separate components, mirrored the same conclusions derived from the comparison of face-to-face and online only formats. Key differences in comparing student interaction amongst the formats included: student leadership; the use of questions; student respect for one another; and student recognition of one another's comments.

Leadership. Several students exercised a variety of leadership roles during the deliberations that sought to help bring forth a collective decision from the class or develop an appropriate agenda to guide the deliberations. By exercising leadership, students sought to move their peers through the deliberations towards a collective decision. Yet, these demonstrations were only present in the face-to-face deliberations. Students did try to direct discussion during the online deliberations in a manner to benefit the deliberation or the class, but did not employ the same effort designed to generate a movement towards a decision.

In the face-to-face deliberation on the national debt as well as the face-to-face portion of the presidency deliberation, certain students adopted the role of agenda-setter for themselves to help direct the class towards both relevant topics of discussion as well to help lead them in a process of stating their preferred solution. While working to define key aspects and assumptions of the topic, outlining the discussion, and transitioning to relevant issues were components of the deliberation participation rubric, the leadership roles that these students took on was not sought by the teacher; yet, this behavior was a welcomed sign of student ownership of the deliberation. This role adoption was without teacher prompt.

In the debt deliberation, several students emerged as an agenda-setter. In adjusting the path of discussion, Luke tried to ensure that the class remained on topic or sought to bring forth what they considered topics of relevance. Throughout the beginning of the deliberation, Paul appeared to be outside of the class' collective mindset as he stated that we should not be limiting the debt; he argued that more spending was needed to revive the economy and, at another point, argued that taxes as a whole were unethical. Paul stated:

With taxes, there are a lot of ethical issues. With taxes, you are basically being mugged by the government [class laughs]. It's like give us your money or we will use force against you... Isn't it unfair to take more money from them when they got that money legitimately based on individuals' free and legal transactions?

Luke immediately responded saying, "I don't think what you are saying is part of our collective assumptions or should even be considered in our discussion," which shifted the discussion from whether taxes are fair in any existence to a discussion on tax rates. At another point in the deliberation, Paul raised the topic of increasing spending, which he had broached previously, stating, "Well, there is more than just raising taxes that can be done to increase revenue. If the economy were doing better more revenue could be produced." Being this was not the first time Paul had talked about reviving the economy, Luke responded, "We have already established that we are going to talk about the debt and not reviving the economy, so let's focus here because that is what our debate is supposed to be." While both points being made by Paul may have been relevant to the discussion in that they are positions on the question, Luke acted to steer the discussion away from these topics as well as rebuke Paul for hindering discussion progress. By navigating the discussion, Luke expressed a desire to remain bounded in a certain framework, which would enable the class to deal with the issue in what they felt was a more conclusive and contained manner.

In addition to adjusting the line of discussion and establishing a framework for understanding, efforts were made to construct a decision-making apparatus to bring the deliberations to a close. As the class period in which the debt deliberation took place reached only twenty minutes left, in a rare instance bringing forth class materials, Matt asked the class to refer back to two items that had been used during the teaching unit: an appendix from the book that had been read and a puzzle from the New York Times that outline varying budget options in respect to how much they would impact the debt. To begin this process, Matt stated:

This is a democracy in action type class, right? I just want to make sure before I go into my next thing. Mr. Busbin gave us this sheet with tackling the deficit. It has different spending items and their percent. I think we should go through and vote on these to see if we can agree on anything. Okay, so this is split into spending and revenue options. Anyone have an opinion on which one to do and tackle first?

Matt proceeded to allow students to suggest what options on the sheet and from the book they would like to vote on. Following his suggestion, Matt led the class discussion for the remainder of the block. Yet, this was not without opposition. Steven noted that he felt compromise was possible on several of the items listed as opposed to simply accepting the proposal, Peter offered the suggestion that the disadvantages be discussed prior to voting, and Paul complained that the options he felt were best did not get placed in neither the book nor the article. The following excerpt from the deliberation illustrates Matt's focus, and that of others, along with some students' attempts to still talk through the varying options as the class period came to a close:

Peter: The average age expectancy has increased, but it hasn't increased that much amongst the poor. It has grown dramatically for the rich and upper middle class, but has barely moved for the poor.

Luke: So, I think a lot of older people might support this if there were some income stipulations.

Peter: Like, if you had several brackets and age eligibility was tied to that bracket.

Paul: A smooth gradient would work best rather than a bracket.

Matt: We are taking up way too much time, let's just vote on another.

Will: Can we have a supermajority here and kill these filibusters to move on.

Matt: Should we address defense spending next?

Matt's focus on reaching a decision was taken on behalf of what he perceived as the class' interest, yet the opposition reflects the need felt by others to express their views. Such a dilemma is reflective of the larger American democratic society in that each citizen is obligated to their own view and free speech, but for decisions to be made there is often a need for compromise and a point at which discussion must end. A similar effort at polling the students to track their preferences occurred in the face-to-face portion of the presidency deliberation. Luke prompted the class to take a vote towards the end of the deliberation by simply asking, "Can we just take a vote?" Luke's comment was perhaps less conducive in fostering an enthusiastic decision-making process than Matt's involvement, but his act of leadership reflects his frustration about the inability of the class to create a decision. Luke talked about the lack of decision-making in his interview: "We don't really have a mechanism for making a decision. We don't really know what that would entail." Thus, Luke's involvement was his interpretation of how such a decision could be manifested without any other proper channels. Both of these occurrences reflected a student awareness of the deliberations coming to a close in terms of time available. Yet, any similar sense of limited time left to make a decision in the online setting never expressed itself. Each of these two students sought to have the class come to a clear decision that was to be announced publicly in front of their class peers before the class concluded. Luke's leadership in the face-to-face portion of the blended deliberation brings forth the question however about the organization of a blended deliberation. By having students participate first online followed by the face-to-face portion, Luke was afforded this opportunity; if the arrangement was vice versa, it is not clear if Luke may have made a similar motion. The face-to-face setting with its clear time boundaries, rather than a scheduled set of days, and physical presence of students provided the impetus for some students to try to collect a final decision.

In another example of leadership, students, during the presidency face-to-face deliberation, sought to develop an agenda for their discussion in addition to constructing a means for making a final decision. Students tried to separate their evaluations into different phases for the varying roles of the president; for instance, two of the initial speakers posed questions that sought to ask the class what they should deliberate about. Chris initially asked after the first two speakers:

If we are going to talk about defining presidential leadership, are we going to talk about how a president succeeded in achieving his agenda or how he led the nation as a whole in getting done what they wanted accomplished?

This question brought forth both a criteria consideration as well as a suggestion for what should be discussed. Immediately following Chris, John added, “We also need to take into account their world affairs. Was the modern president out in the world or focused in his own nation?” Yet, the class did not adopt these suggestions; students began contributing their own thoughts to the initial question posed by the teacher, rather than building on the suggestions of their classmates. Further on during the discussion, Brigid offered the possibility of separating the deliberation by each role independently. Taking the debt decision-making apparatus further, Peter adopted the option-by-option concept in the presidency deliberation when asked, “Should we just start going through the presidents in order? Do the pros and cons of each, then decide at the end?” Yet, like those before him in suggesting an order to the discussion, this was largely ignored as Matt quickly posed a question to the class: “I want to ask one question though. Do we give presidents too much credit for the wars they win? We haven’t really had a wartime general as president since Washington.” It was not until the end of the class period when the discussion had narrowed to an exploration of the advantages and disadvantages of FDR and Reagan that the class adopted the practice of each student stating who they preferred and why. Thus, like the debt deliberation,

the constraints of class time prompted the students to construct an agenda with the purpose of shaping the flow of discussion.

Moreover, in addition to seeking a group decision as well as building an agenda for discussion, students demonstrated leadership during the deliberations by verbally recognizing mental obstacles that could limit the students' ability to reason thoroughly about the presented issue. Establishing a framework or perspective to work within was a significant obstacle of the presidency face-to-face deliberation that students sought to address by adopting an agenda-setting role. Two difficulties emerged in establishing a framework for the presidency deliberation: deciding whether to judge each president in a current context or use historical empathy and developing a similar set of beliefs or criteria to judge each modern president by. Owen verbally acknowledged that each student had a different means of evaluating the presidents, but that these differences posed a problem. He said:

I mean like, my views on the subject and other people's views on the subject differ. For example, when you say they exercised strong presidential leadership that is in reference to them pursuing a certain aim or certain goal in a system that is constructed in your mind. We need to pick a system or define a system. We don't have to agree on it or anything, but we all need to work in it.

His statement served as a profound insight to the nature of class deliberations. He identified an obstacle that he felt would slow the class from coming to a decision. Steven also recognized the difficulty of this deliberation when he said, "I don't think it is fair to take a president out of their time period. How we judge a president to be good or bad depends on their time period." Both Owen and Steven put forth these views early in the face-to-face component of the presidency deliberation. They quickly sought to have these dilemmas addressed, which to them posed a challenge to the class moving forward with making an informed and well-reasoned decision. Rather than focus on their own preferences, they hoped for the class to resolve these lingering questions that would enable the class collectively to move towards a decision. The identification

of these problems also represented a deep and critical thinking that the students used to evaluate the topic as a whole.

In the online Electoral College deliberation, there was never an attempt made to poll the students about which reform option they felt was best. Rather, students simply stated their preference at varying moments throughout the deliberation. In the very first post of the deliberation, Steven instantly sought to justify an answer to the policy issue when he wrote:

The most obvious option to a policy maker is to do nothing to alter the Electoral College. There are numerous reasons to keep the current system, but the most prominent one is the Electoral College's ability to keep the country together and its contribution to stability. When a winner emerges from the election that has no doubt won a majority voted from the people. This is the most powerful method of creating and keeping the cohesiveness of the country because of the legitimacy of victory.

Rather than beginning to analyze the Electoral College holistically and establish criteria by which to analyze the issue by, Steven immediately presented what he felt should be done in respect to the question. The final three posts of the deliberation also reveal that the deliberation lacked an organized method of addressing the question as well as a linear, progressive discussion. The final posts read:

Lauren: I agree. I think the only way for the proposal to go through is through an amendment. I feel that is if we are unable to change to DV that proportional vote should be the next choice.

Peter: @ Mary-It is not that I would disenfranchise rural areas; it is that, given their low population, they would be far less relevant in any remotely fair system than they currently are simply because they are such a small percentage of the population.

Matt: The country in its current state makes it way too easy for a candidate to run a tarmac campaign if we had a direct vote. 82% of the country resides in a suburb and or city, with this demographic and a gullible public the candidate that lies and promises the most will usually win. Again why should we attempt to fix what is not broken, heck while we're on a crusade for democratization we should abolish Congress! The government of the people directly voting on everything would yield poor results. The people would pillage the government and the land that they live on before they know what would have hit them. Bottom line is that the Electoral College has been a positive way of electing the president for a long time and will stay that way as long as we have 2 primary parties in power. Is it fair? No it's not. Is that a bad thing? Absolutely not.

In these final posts, several topics are addressed without any semblance of a final position being adopted from the class. Lauren, in her post, sought to address the implementation topic that

occurred previously in the deliberation. Peter's comment also served as a follow-up on a previous topic, the presence of rural voters; rather than stating his final position or discussing how to implement his preference, Peter. Matt, also like Peter, issued a rebuttal to the advocates of a direct vote solution. However, Matt did make clear his preference or answer to the primary question, which Peter and Lauren did not answer in a direct form. The conclusion of this deliberation differs greatly from that of the face-to-face debt deliberation as well as the second-half of the presidency deliberation: no student sought to organize or arrange for a final decision to be made known. From a teacher's perspective, to call for a collective announcement of each student's final position is more difficult online than it is in a face-to-face setting primarily due to the inability to dictate the exact timing of students' posting; such dictatorial commands could also foster declining participation at other points in the deliberation as well as decreased enjoyment (Palmer, Holt, Bray, 2008).

In the face-to-face deliberations, students assumed a variety of leadership roles to accommodate for deficiencies in the deliberation process as established by the teacher. Several different students attempted to introduce a decision-making procedure, develop an agenda or line of discussion, and confront cognitive obstacles that appeared to be hindering the class. This behavior indicated that students did desire to fashion a collective decision or process at times. Yet, similar behavior did not occur online. These efforts, and their corresponding absence online, do reveal limitations in the deliberation structure employed in the classroom as well as online; perhaps, unlike a Socratic seminar, a deliberation requires a more organized discussion flow or greater teacher-involvement to enable students to achieve a decision.

Student questioning. Students interacted with one another through the use of questions to either challenge their peers or seek more information. Overall, students utilized questions more

as a means of seeking new information or clarification as opposed to using questions as a means of challenging others' ideas and positions. Yet, the students who posed the questions often did not do so in what can be interpreted as a curious or positive nature; the language and tone of the questions or the circumstances in which they occurred appeared to be designed to enhance the standing of the student posing the question.

During the online Electoral College deliberation, in an effort to engage the class as a whole or establish a topic of focus, students challenged their peers by asking them to provide certain arguments. These challenges also appeared more debate-like, which differs from a deliberation theoretically, in that these questions are issued by what appears as teams or factions of students (Parker, 2003; Hess & Posselt, 2002). For example, Owen and Luke posed two different questions to the group with the purpose of either seeking participation or for the group to address their concerns. Owen stated the following question: "Supporters of the proportional plan: what advantages/justifications does it have over direct vote?" Luke asked, "Do any EC supporters have any refutations of my or Owen's criticisms?" Both of these questions appeared to take on a tone of superiority in that Luke and Owen wished for others to try to refute or prove them wrong. Yet, despite their more negative nature, these questions differed from other questions posed during the online deliberation in that these questions sought to focus or move discussion in a central direction as well as they were not follow-up questions to a previous post. Most other questions posed online were directed towards one student in response to something they had posted previously. For example, Mary posted the following directed towards Peter:

@Peter- just because rural areas are "basically irrelevant" doesn't mean they shouldn't have a say. A move toward a direct or proportional vote is a move to a more democratic process that showcases the true opinions of the people. How can you expect to get a real democratic vote when you so easily discount a portion of opinion-givers?

Mary's question is typical of the questions posed online, which sought to challenge a student on their position through either exposing a contradiction or asking students to provide more support. Luke, Owen, and Mary's questions, while seeking more information, did have an apparent slant or prejudice in their composition; therefore, while this question does seek information technically, this solicitation lacks a true aura of curiosity for the sake of learning more. While questions were presented during online deliberations, these questions were often directed to a limited audience or designed as a challenge to opposing students rather than being productive in moving the class towards a collective decision or encouraging the production of more information for the sake of developing depth to the deliberation.

Overall, students used questions more constructively and regularly in face-to-face deliberations as opposed to online deliberations. In the face-to-face deliberations, students utilized questions more frequently than online for their own understanding. Students sought clarification a total of twenty times in face-to-face deliberations as compared to six times online; in the debt deliberation alone, students asked for clarification fifteen times. During the debt deliberation, in one of her few times contributing, Ruth utilized a series of questions directed towards Matt as a means of finding out more information about a policy solution he had proposed. While Matt had proposed his idea earlier in the deliberation, Ruth began her line of questioning later on by asking:

Ruth: Okay, I have a question for Matt. With your Medicare and Social Security idea, after you have decided that one does not need the benefits, would they still have to pay for it? How is it fair that one is paying for something that other people get and not them?

Matt: People pay for things they do not get or do not need all the time. Especially with taxation.

Ruth: So, if you are paying money to the government and then you make more money with your wealth increasing to a certain point, then you reach a certain point where you no longer get the benefit .

Matt: Yeah, that is how Medicare and Medicaid already work. The same thing applies here and to every welfare program. If you don't qualify for welfare, you still pay taxes into it.

Ruth: So, in essence, you are proposing a more advanced Medicaid to replace Medicare.

Matt: Yeah, but I am trying make sure the problem is solvent.

Ruth: Okay, another question I have is how would we pay for your second idea? If we decide to take everyone's Social Security contributions and place them into a private fund, how do we pay for those reliant on Social Security right now?

Matt: It would have to be phased in over time. Something like 10 years. I don't have any specifics. The Bush administration tried to do this.

Ruth's questions not only helped her receive the information she was seeking, but also gave Matt the opportunity to expound upon his proposal. Yet, the persistence of her questioning did take on the impression of an inquisition. In an example of a less aggressive question, John, in an effort to get clarification for himself, asked during the presidency deliberation, "Wouldn't an internationalist president use force to promote peace?" His question came at the conclusion of a lengthy discussion about the differences between internationalist and nationalistic foreign policy approaches. By posing the question, John sought to have assistance from his peers in resolving a definitional question he still struggled with internally at the end of this discussion segment. Both Ruth and John's questions serve as typical examples of questions posed in face-to-face deliberations with the purpose of extracting more information as a means of producing general clarification.

Certain questions or questioning strategies served as another means of discussion leadership. In the face-to-face deliberations, students utilized questions as a means to solicit ideas and information for the sake of moving the deliberation forward for the benefit of the class. For example, Owen utilized questions to help the class focus on establishing a definition following a limited discussion on wasteful programs:

Chris: We should definitely decrease deficit spending with cutting useless programs.

Peter: What defines a useless program?

Brigid: It is a matter of opinion I guess.

Steven: Two clear options are either addressing discretionary spending or reforming mandatory spending programs like Medicare.

Owen: I think when it was said it is a matter of opinion is exactly what needs to be focused on. What one person says is needed to be cut, another person would say is really needed. What should we consider? How would we define wasteful spending?

By posing these questions, Owen tried to focus the group on establishing criteria to help guide the deliberation. This followed a brief attempt at defining a “useless program” that was quickly dismissed transitioning into a statement on discretionary and mandatory spending. Had Owen not spoken, it is reasonable to believe that the discussion may have continued in such an irregular fashion. Rather than simply allow the discussion to flow without established definitions or to continue without any sense of conclusion, Owen interjected his question seeking to establish a more methodological approach. In this instance, Owen’s questions served to aid the group in developing operational criteria and soliciting policy solution ideas; this is unlike his Electoral College question which was meant more to demonstrate that his opponents lacked evidence or intellect to refute him.

While the questions sometimes reflected a more negative tone, their frequency in face-to-face deliberations helped spur more discussion. Questions did occur online, but not as often or in a manner as beneficial to those in the classroom setting; this is despite purposeful modeling of questions online that were posed by the teacher. Questioning was modeled by the teacher in both settings, yet the inability for a majority of students to pose well-structured questions designed to foster critical thinking about the subject provides evidence to support Dull and Murrow’s (2008) assertion that too few students are exposed to effective questioning. If students have limited exposure to dialogic questioning by teachers in past educational settings, they believe students thus become less likely to imitate or demonstrate these democratic skills in class discussions.

While it is unclear the students in this study's exposure to previous dialogic questioning, they lagged in consistently producing questions that had the potential to make the deliberation more meaningful.

Student respect for peers. In their interaction with one another, students brought forth a sense of honesty in their commentary regarding others' statements. Reinforcing previous research, students reported that they felt more comfortable and honest online (Merryfield 2000; Meyer 2007). In the survey, 11 out of 17 students indicated they felt more comfortable online than they did in face-to-face deliberations, which may have resulted in increased participation online. Yet, for other students, the greater sense of comfort or the belief that they could be more honest online resulted in a heightened degree of disrespect or flagrant opposition to the ideas put forth by others. Their participation detracted from the respectful environment that was intended to be implemented and adhered to as directed in the rubric and model given to the class. In an online discussion about the Electoral College, three students who were advocating for a move to a direct vote at different points rudely rejected the arguments put forth by their peers:

Owen: The only argument for the EC is an argument against democracy. And to anyone who attempts that argument: justify why your opinion matters and why it should ever be listened to. Why don't we just ignore that argument and consider the person who made it uneducated for proposing it.

Luke: Helen, where is the cut-off for when you begin trusting people to make decisions? Why don't we just have people with the highest IQs in America pick the president? How about the people with the highest incomes? They've made good decisions up to this point, right? They'll make the best decisions for the nation, right? They will be sure to take the plight of the poor and oppressed (and stupid?) into account and make things better for everyone right? But wait, we shouldn't do that because it's not fair AT ALL. Do you honestly think they would do those things? I am honestly offended by what I have just read.

Peter: @Matt: The rise of the USA had nothing to do with the Electoral College [sic] and everything to do with a vast uncivilized wilderness and massive immigration. What's worse Matt is that you know it. Don't act like an unformed half-wit when you are not one.

These three individuals repeated similar attacks throughout the deliberation; at no point in the deliberation did they put forth positive justification for moving to a direct vote system. Peter and

Luke directly challenged two students while questioning their peers' logic in a rude manner; yet, similar behavior was not observed in the face-to-face discussions. While these three examples exemplified the disrespectful disagreements online, their willingness to disagree with others was reflective of students' attitudes about participation online. In the survey, 12 of the 17 students felt they were more worried about hurting other's feelings in face-to-face settings; ten students also indicated they were more likely to disagree with students online than they were in face-to-face deliberations. Thus, while students may feel more comfortable online, this sense of comfort does not necessarily generate positive results.

While there were some negative occurrences, such as the above instances of students rudely disagreeing with each other as well as times when the discussion became narrowly focused in a negative manner, these negative traits were neither characteristic of every student nor prevalent through the entirety of each deliberation. Some students did not interpret these disagreements as hostile, but rather the acts of very interested students. Helen said "It was kind of exciting to see everyone else get into it." Mary, in response to a question about student engagement, stated: "There are always people who are more involved than others and these typically are really outspoken and strong supporters of their own side. But, I think generally everyone enjoyed the discussions and getting their opinions out." Neither of these students saw their peers strongly expressing their opinions or challenging others as a negative component of the deliberations. Yet, their interpretation may be derived from not being familiar with or having experienced a conducive and effective deliberation that led to a unified position; rather, their previous exposure to class discussions may have been in discussions that appeared more debate-like. Following point deductions after the Electoral College deliberation for several instances of discourteous disagreement, as illustrated previously, the other two deliberations did not reveal

any other overtly blatant rudeness directed towards students. Therefore, the majority of students treated one another in a respectful manner.

Acknowledgement of others' contributions. Student engagement with their peers' contributions during deliberations reveals the extent to which the process is a collective experience. By listening to other students and reflecting on the opinions exchanged while respecting the differences amongst each other, the process of deliberation creates a "public" or environment in which people work together to solve a shared problem (Parker, 2003). Therefore, the deliberations were analyzed for evidence of students building upon each other's contributions to determine to what extent a "public" had been created.

While coding for elements of critical reasoning, the deliberations were also examined for evidence of students directly recognizing the comments of others by either invoking the names of students or referencing previous statements. In the online portion of the presidency deliberation and the Electoral College deliberation, students recognized the contributions of others 16 and 13 times respectively. Yet, in the face-to-face portion of the presidency deliberation and the debt deliberation, students directly recognized the contributions of others five and six times respectively. Students cited their peers or used their names much more frequently online than they did in face-to-face deliberations. In their online posts, students often employed Twitter behavior to indicate their references to others. For example, during the Electoral College deliberation, Luke wrote:

@ Mark: Well-put.

@Will: I think the ones we should be scared of are the ones already in power, the ones you view as "protecting us from ourselves" or whatnot.

The use of these writing techniques reveals the recognition language that students employed online that differed itself from the face-to-face deliberations. No student ever referred a question

or comment to a student in the classroom by stating “At ____.” Yet, the presence of more recognition of other students online presents the possibility that students may have been recognizing others online more frequently as they may not have felt students would know who they were responding to due to the asynchronous nature of the deliberations. This problem is enhanced by the decision to not make the online discussion threaded.

Despite the statistical evidence suggesting that students referred to one another more online, student perceptions of the two formats revealed the opposite. When asked what he did not like about the online deliberations, Luke stated, “there was a lot less direct engagement of most people. They wouldn’t really respond to your points. They would just answer the main question again.” Luke’s comment leads to a perception that there was a lack of engagement online as evidenced by certain questions being ignored. Sharing this opinion, Owen wrote during the Electoral College deliberation following a question posed by Luke that, “Of our multiple questions, few if any, have been responded to.” One such experience occurred when Owen had posted the following question with these the accompanying post showing that his question was largely ignored:

Owen: Why does it matter what the Founding Fathers wanted? Does that somehow make the idea more just or honorable? Steven, what do you mean by "...but it works just as well (as direct democracy)"?

Will: I am in favor of the Electoral College for the purpose of maintaining a safety net in the event of a pathos provoked national election. Brief yet strong waves of pathos could easily be taken advantage of by someone ambitious enough to ride them into the executive seat which could put the nation in a very unpleasant bind. The electoral college could, in a worst case scenario, ensure that someone clearly deranged from either side of the spectrum (See Goldwater or the modern incarnation of Marx) would not have control over the highest power next to our constitution nor our very large supply of functional warheads.

While Owen's questions were produced as a follow-up to a previous post, Will largely did not reply to these questions or the topic presented. A similar occurrence occurred later in the deliberation when Jane posted her initial contribution followed up by a question from Owen:

Jane: I agree with Mark and Greg. The current electoral system does not accurately represent the direct vote of the population. With the proportional plan, the citizens' votes will be represented fairly, and the Electoral College will still exist as a type of safety net against potentially harmful candidates.

Owen: So you want the people's will to be counted, unless the electors disagree?

Part of Owen and Luke's frustrations may be easily explained by the asynchronous nature of these online deliberations. Questions that were produced to invoke further follow-up or clarification may be ignored temporarily as the original author, whose post led to these questions, was no longer online, thus unable to reply. Yet, other students may have been capable of replying to these questions allowing the deliberation to reflect a more continuous flow and develop further depth on a topic-at-hand. Had students responded to the questions of their peers, those posing the questions may have come out of the online deliberations more satisfied as their own contributions would have generated reflection by others.

Other students expressed some reasoning to explain why online deliberations did not have the continuity that face-to-face deliberations seemed to possess. Brigid, in responding to a question about her perceptions of engagement online, stated, "Online seemed more like an obligation for a grade. Not everyone will read it." This statement reveals that perhaps some students would quickly get online to post for the sake of receiving a grade; rather than examine what has occurred throughout the deliberation, students may be responding to a comment that has been posted immediately or responding directly to the original question or the topic as a whole. When asked about her enjoyment of online deliberations, Mary stated, "Sometimes people would write a lot and it was just hard keeping up with it all." Adding to Brigid's concern,

Mary identified the task of reading the deliberation transcript as a hurdle that prevented students from engaging fully with the material that had been previously presented. Will wrote during the Electoral College deliberation that “I feel I have already contributed my opinion but reading this further has become more punishment than school assignment.” Having to sort through many lengthy posts in order to both understand where the deliberation currently was in terms of topic as well as to publish something new that enhanced the deliberation could easily pose a challenge to the continuity of the online deliberations. Brigid and Mary’s comments in addition to Luke and Owen’s statements indicate that some comments were overlooked, yet other comments were responded to as indicated by the many different times students recognized and directed comments to one another. Thus, while some discontinuity did occur online, disjointedness cannot be said to be characteristic of the discussion as a whole, yet frequent enough to detract from the overall productiveness and enjoyment of the deliberation.

Another indicator of student interaction and engagement with one another is the students’ continuation of discussion, or their ability to maintain a continued line of focus. In the Electoral College deliberation and online portion of the presidential deliberation, student discussion sometimes lacked continuity as one student’s comment veered from the topic-at-hand or a discussion topic that had been previously departed from arose again later in the discussion without prompting. One example of this disrupted or inconsistent flow is seen in this excerpt of discussion from the Electoral College deliberation:

Jane: ...The current electoral system does not accurately represent the direct vote of the population. With the proportional plan, the citizen's votes will be represented fairly, and the Electoral College will still exist as a type of safety net against potentially harmful candidates.

Owen: I see no benefit in the proportional system over that of direct vote. It seems to be essentially the same thing: only in the proportional system, one has to deal with how to split EVs into fractions. So you want the people's will to be counted, unless the electors disagree?

Irene: But in a direct vote, there is the probability that there will be more third parties entering the election. This leads to a plurality win, not the majority, which can skew the outcome of the election. In addition, there is likely to be more demands of recount, and overall, a more unstable election.

Owen: The views of the people right now are probably not a majority in any direction, but only appear that way because of the EC system. It is essentially pretending the president-elect has greater support than he/she does. And I think it's important to note that many third party voters whose candidate loses would probably still support the winner, especially if he/she was in their political quadrant.

Mark: True, Sarah. Recount of Florida was insane to me. (I was in Korea) Determining a president by counting with in either manual or machinery method at one Sunshine State was not democratic, for me at that time, the news from US sounded absurd and wrong. Recount seems not important, but we have all discussed for democracy and people's will, but recounting should not occur for that reasons.

Monica: I agree with Jane that the proportional system seems to be the most sensible and accurate. The current system is not very accurate in the direct vote of the people. I think that the EC has too much power in that it can change the outcomes of elections. With a proportional system the people's votes will be better represented- and it will also benefit third parties, unlike the EC that favors only two candidates.

Lauren: I agree with Mary and favor the direct vote. Although it may not be the most efficient plan, I think it is a good way to pick the president. I'm for getting rid of the EC and the faithless electors that come with it and this plan definitely will put an end to it.

Owen: Supporters of the proportional plan: what advantages/justifications does it have over direct vote?

Luke: @Owen: You are correct about the skewing of votes into the two parties, making those parties seem more supported than they actually are. Duverger's Law, anyone? Also, what is less efficient about simply abolishing the EC? Everyone still votes, as they do now, but we get rid of the extra step of requiring electors. It appears to be more efficient...

Adam: I give Steven, but up to a point, it can add proportional vote to it.

Owen: Yeah, I'm not understanding the argument that direct vote would be too messy; it's the EC that's a mess. And as far as recounts go, I would rather have a recount than lessen democracy and place someone in office against the will of the people.

In this excerpt, students disrupted the continuation or flow of the discussion three times through introducing a new topic focus. Initially, Owen posed a follow-up question to Jane's post, which she left unanswered. This lack of response would most likely not have occurred in a face-to-face deliberation in which Jane's direct presence could have allowed her to reply immediately following the question. While the discussion does take more of a continuous line in this excerpt based on its commonality of the themes of third parties and recounts, both Lauren and Adam bring up their agreement with students who had posted the previous day. Lauren's post was in

reference to a post by Mary that had occurred nine posts previously; Mary had written the previous evening:

I believe that the best way to accurately represent the true feelings of the people is to let people vote directly. The EC can skew the results through faithless electors. Who wants a president the majority didn't vote for? With direct voting and abolishing the EC, people will feel their vote actually counts for something. More people will turn out to vote and actually support their president.

Lauren, in addition to referencing a point of the deliberation that occurred earlier, also diverted back to the topic of faithless directors, while the discussion at the time focused on the role of third parties and potential recounting of votes. Adam's agreement was in respect to a post that had occurred 23 posts earlier. Steven had written:

The Electoral College has functioned for over 200 years and the United States has not come across a majorly dysfunctional era. The fact is that the founding fathers intended the States to determine the President, not the people. "Article 2 of the U.S. Constitution grants the power to elect the president and vice president to the states through the Electoral College system. Under the Constitution, the highest-ranking U.S. officials elected by direct popular vote of the people are the governors of the states." The founding fathers were also fearful of a tyrannical majority, which the Electoral College has also prevented. It may not be the best in terms of exercising democracy, but it works just as well.

Adam's post turns away directly from the line of discussion to focus on a topic that had occurred much earlier. The redirection of Adam and Lauren's posts demonstrates the inconsistency of flow that occurs in online deliberations in which students have the text of the discussion to read allowing them to go back and reference a previous matter. A final example of the discontinuity in this excerpt is Luke's ignoring of the question posted by Owen. While Owen sought to move the discussion in a new direction with his question, Luke went back to the previous topic, third parties. Based on the numerous instances of disruption or divergence in the continuity of the deliberation, it reveals the difficulty that students may experience online of deliberating a complex controversial political issue that they have been tasked with of solving.

These interruptions in the flow of discussion partially result from the technological choice that I made in designing the online discussions: I chose to use a non-threaded format versus a threaded format. This decision was based in the desire to see a continuous line of discussion, similar to that of a face-to-face deliberation; had a threaded format been used, students may have been more prone to participate solely in certain side discussions and never engage themselves with others (Maurino et al., 2008). Yet, by choosing not to use a threaded format, I prevented students who may not have been consistently checking the forum from contributing their thoughts about significant sub-issues that had been discussed earlier in the chronology of the discussion.

The inconsistent line of discussion observed in online deliberations can be connected to the perception that students are posting their opinions about the larger topic-at-hand, rather than building off of what had been said previously in a manner that substantively aids the progress of the deliberation. In the initial posts of the online-component of the presidency deliberation, the student responses all focused on the individual opinions of the responding student to the preliminary question posed by the teacher in the prompt, rather than utilizing what had just been said in an effort to develop more depth to the discussion. The following excerpt illustrates how students are largely posting their beliefs without consideration of what has been posted previously:

John: I believe that in order to be a good leader a president must possess certain qualities. They must be honest and let the American people rightly know what is going on in domestic, economic, and foreign affairs when it rightly concerns us. They must be able to make the hard decisions when it is necessary. If a president is not willing to make hard choices because of what we may think of him nothing will ever get done and nothing will ever change or get better. The president must be in the public eye. He cannot be someone who will hide behind an office desk and never face the public. He must stand up for what he believes in and never falter no matter how tough times are. He must be wise, kind, and thoughtful not rash, brash, and annoying. He must be dignified with a head held high but not look down on the little people. When a president has all of these qualities he is then a good leader.

Adam: I think a president be a commander in war and peace. Not a lot of scandals to his name

Helen: I think a great presidential leader is one who has his own set of political beliefs but does not stubbornly believe that his way is the only way. A president who can work with both parties and find a solution that appeases all in a quick and efficient manner.

Chris: I believe a presidential leader is one who is firm in his beliefs and values yet doesn't allow arrogance or adamant ways to hinder his ability to lead the country in a decisive manner or do what's best for the country from an unbiased standpoint sometimes. While it is important to have strong moral values, they shouldn't get in the way of leading the country in a positive direction and shouldn't bury the country in negativity trying to get his personal agenda accomplished. It takes the right balance of decisiveness, values, and ability to lay personal responsibilities down to make an effective presidential leader.

Owen: One has to look at the goals (abstract and particular) of any leader and the ability with which he/she was able to work towards those goals. In this, one must consider the methods used and consequences of actions taken. What characteristics aid in achieving one goal may hinder another, as the methods used in one condition may be inappropriate for another.

Each student put forth their own concept of presidential leadership. The students do not recognize the similarities or differences amongst their posts. For example, Helen does not see that her preference for flexibility contradicts John's preference for a president to possess steadfastness. Chris, who takes the middle ground between Helen and John, does not recognize this as well in his post. These posts demonstrate how in the beginning of this online deliberation students largely responded to the prompt without acknowledging what had been posted by others before them similar to a writing assignment rather than an interactive deliberation.

Differing from online deliberations, students engaged in back-and-forth building upon the statements of others immediately at the commencement of face-to-face deliberations. The following statements represent the initial dialogue of face-to-face component of the presidency deliberation, thus contrasting itself with the online example given previously:

John: I kind of think that the modern president is someone that the people can rely on and hope that they can help the nation through their goals. I think though that we, as Americans, from the time he takes office begin judging him and it's our judgments that lead to his failures. We rely on him so much and with our judgments, that they begin to think too much of our opinions. If we were to withdraw our own personal judgments, then maybe we can begin to see what he really did for the nation and the immediate results.

Paul: I think it is important to note that what we call presidential leadership isn't just a set definition, we have a conception of what it means going into the discussion and elections even if

we try to set out and define it another way. So, we have to look at the process that leads to certain people becoming president and the process that leads us to determine if they are great or not. I would say FDR is the best example of presidential leadership just because he is the first one we think of when we talk about a modern president. He defines what we think about when we talk about the roles of a modern president. He is the bedrock of what we understand as a modern president because he was first.

Chris: I think that is a really good point and I like it. But, this does not mean that the first is always the best. I am not really disagreeing with your opinion of FDR but, it is great that he was the first modern president and everything, but the role has evolved and others had to take on more challenges. There are better leaders now. We can see history through the whole in different aspects and we can criticize his success a little more. I just think there are a few things he could have done better just like any president. If we are going to talk about defining presidential leadership, are we going to talk about how a president succeeded in achieving his agenda or how he led the nation as a whole in getting done what they wanted accomplished?

John: We also need to take into account their world affairs. Was the modern president out in the world or focused in his own nation?

Will: Just about that though is that there is little motivation to go out beyond one's nation. There is no more World War IIs going on. I am not really sure how much we can look at FDR anymore and say he is a modern president with how much things have changed over the last few decades. If you try to explain the internet to FDR, he would stare at you and ask if that was even possible. I am just not sure if we can define the foreign policy of FDR and compare it to modern day. There is just nothing to compare with, we don't have a Hitler today that poses such a threat.

Steven: I don't think it is fair to take a president out of the context of their time period. How we judge a president to be good or bad depends on their time period. Like for FDR, he tried so hard to fix things even though you could contribute the problems overcome to World War II. You shouldn't try to place him in the modern context.

Owen: Pretty much whatever is expected of a president or what people think going into a discussion like this, they need to remember the role changes. It changes continuously. It is too hard to say that these said presidents are modern presidents because they have these responsibilities. It also relates to what information we have available on these president from anything like...more recent presidents have a lot more information available and catalogued. There is less and less going back on the presidents.

In this example, unlike the initial posts of the online component of the presidency deliberation, each of these students improves on previous statements before them. These comments reveal that the students are listening to one another and building upon what has been made known immediately before them. For instance, Chris complimented Paul's contribution, while providing an explanation for why he disagreed with the reasoning. John aided the discussion by identifying what he believes was missing from the previous contributions. The observed continuity and immediate development of topic depth in face-to-face deliberations did not occur online, which

began with many students posting their own responses to the initial prompt with little regard for repeating or recognizing what had been said previously.

More apparent than student reasoning, how students interact with one another emerges as a significant area in which the formats differ. Students seemed to operate more collectively in the face-to-face deliberations as they responded to others' comments more frequently as well as exercised varying degrees of leadership as they sought to guide the discussion. In comparison, students responded more inconsistently to others' comments online, thus building a line of discussion that lacked a continuous and connected line of dialogue. Students identified this problem in both the discussion itself and their interviews seeing it as a hurdle to achieving a more effective deliberation and as an indictment of the deliberation structure. Another difference between the two formats was how students related to one another; some students were also more likely to producing direct and blunt statements critical of their peers. Each of these format differences carries implications that could impact the ability of students to deliberate about controversial political issues collectively and productively.

The Role of the Teacher

In the previous sections, the most evident differences in students' deliberation of controversial political issues amongst online, face-to-face, and blended formats were explored. While the analysis of collected data indicates that the observed class' performance was largely shaped by social factors, such as peer-to-peer interaction and participation, and the forms of critical reasoning evident, other aspects of the deliberation experience may also impact the deliberation process, most notably the decisions made by the teacher. Three teacher decisions emerged, through the careful analysis of the collected evidence following initial analysis and

coding, as having had specific impact on student engagement and performance. The three factors include: the topic selection for the deliberation; the facilitation of the deliberation; and the focus on a collective decision.

Topic selection

Part of the study sought to determine if the topics chosen for the deliberation had an influence on the extent and manner of participation by different students. In addition to the primary research question, a sub-research question was posed to address this inquiry: *how does the choice of topic influence the student's participation in the deliberation?* If it could be ascertained that a certain type of question or a specific category of topic influenced participation and engagement, then it may help provide insight for teachers in making determinations of what should be deliberated in the class.

Of the three sub-research questions, this question posed the most difficulty in answering. Several questions on the survey sought to generate insight into this question. Yet, it was intended that during the interviews, the most insightful data would emerge. Students were asked the following three questions about the topic:

1. What did you think about the topic?
2. Did you feel engaged or a part of the deliberation?
3. What about the topic do you believe made it interesting or not interesting for the class?

Because the person conducting the interviews deviated from the script, these questions did not fully capture the intention that they had been designed for. The study design had been intended to compare five to seven students in their thinking about all three topics. However, because this did not occur as originally designed, some students were only interviewed regarding their

thoughts and reactions to two deliberations, thus preventing a comparison of all three formats. In addition to the interview, efforts were made to observe student behavior and side commentary outside of the deliberations that may have indicated the interest or disinterest of students. Yet, despite the limited means of collecting revealing information for this question, interesting insight was gained through the analysis of the limited data.

Students expressed frustration with the Electoral College deliberation. They stated that the limited options they were asked to consider restricted what could be explored in the discussion. Students were presented in class with the following options: keep the Electoral College; adopt a proportional plan; move to the Congressional District Plan as currently used by Maine and Nebraska; embrace the Bonus Plan; or shift towards a direct vote. Students could also have discussed forcing all states to outlaw “faithless electors.” Following the conclusion of the first week of two during the deliberation, Will expressed his desire to move onto a new topic since he felt everyone had stated their opinions, thus exhausting the topic. Will stated: “Well, I guess we can move on now. No new opinions are coming.” However, Will’s comment at the beginning of class reveals a limited understanding or view of the task or purpose of deliberation; he failed to see that students should then begin moving forward with discussion seeking to establish a common answer or decision regarding the question posed. Helen pointed out a similar complaint to that of Will’s in her interview. She believed that exploration of the topic and class engagement was hindered by the immediate grouping of students into either those advocating for change or those wishing to maintain the current Electoral College model. When asked about the presence of an obstacle that kept the class from making a collective decision, Helen stated, “It seemed you were either for keeping it or abolishing it.” Helen’s quote illustrates the nature of the Electoral College deliberation in that the discussion was largely either a defense or critique of the

system. The students may have felt contained and prevented from “out-of-the-box” thinking that Hess (2002) found other students having disliked about certain deliberation topics. Originally, in addition to its content connection, the Electoral College topic was chosen as a deliberation topic due to its limited number of foreseeable solutions that might have made it more manageable for students to come to a collective decision with as opposed to addressing an unrestricted number of solutions or combination of solutions; yet, the limited number of solutions served as a constraint in the eyes of students.

Similar to the Electoral College deliberation, the presidency discussion was limited to clear-cut answers that could not be combined in a new or “out-of-the-box” fashion. Students had to select a president from FDR to George W. Bush. Unlike the Electoral College deliberation, no students expressed any concern with the limited availability of options as a hindrance to the success of the deliberation. However, the presidency deliberation did open to students the availability of discussing additional subjects beyond political science, which the Electoral College largely lacked.

The presidency deliberation allowed for cross-curriculum explorations that the other two topics generally did not permit, except for the economics coverage in the national debt deliberation. Students considered history, economics, and psychology in addition to more abstract topics like leadership and morals in the presidency deliberation as they ranked modern presidents on the basis of their own established leadership criteria. Luke expressed his enjoyment of getting to address what he called the “cults of personality” that often surround presidents and explore the psychology of leadership associated with this topic. While working on student presentations during the unit, Matt remarked to me that “This is really cool getting to look at history from a political perspective. We’re also getting to use some stuff from economics.” Yet,

from a teacher's perspective, the vast number of concepts to be considered may have posed a challenge to student participation. Students had to evaluate and weigh numerous leadership traits and historical events in a discussion format that tended to transition from topic to topic fairly rapidly.

During the interviews, several students noted what they perceived as the relevancy and immediacy of the debt issue. This issue was studied and deliberated during November and December of 2011, when the congressional super-committee failed to come to its own decision on what should be done to address the growing national debt. The failure garnered a lot of media attention at the time, which added to the depth in which the class was exploring the issue. Helen stated, "I thought it was good because it was a current event, something we are going to have to deal with for years." She related to the problem in that she saw the potential for herself to be impacted in the future if the issue remains unresolved. Greg also noted the significance of the topic: "Very interesting, very important considering how important debt crises are to anybody, especially the government." None of the students interviewed saw the Electoral College as having immediacy to their lives or as a current event, yet their attitudes may have differed had this been deliberated during a presidential election year.

Luke, one of the six students interviewed, stood out from the others in his views of the topics that were discussed in class. Luke was often observed reading books about Marxism in class as well as other literature that might be interpreted as critical of the United States and its government system; he also was the president of a student club that met monthly to discuss philosophical questions about the nature of governments and religion. While he found the psychology part of the presidential deliberation interesting, he did not relate well to the topics overall. When asked if the deliberation topics were interesting, Luke stated:

Not interesting. I think it is just that I don't feel those issues are important to me politically. Everything we talked about in class was in the context of our government. It has a liberal or conservative viewpoint. But, the class is US government, so I am not faulting anyone.

Luke's political ideology thus prevented him from being able to develop a personal interest or sense of importance to the issues. This lack of connection also seemed to interfere with his full participation. When asked if he felt able to openly express his opinion, Luke responded, "I was hesitant because my opinion isn't Republican, Democracy, or anything like that." Luke's experience with the class deliberations brings forth the dilemma in courses that are US-focused in their curriculum. While the course curriculum called for an in-depth analysis of American government, this inward focus and the political framing of discussion on issues central to it could isolate those who associate with ideologies considered on the fringe of the American citizenry.

In an attempt to examine if students enjoyed topics that would be classified as controversial or noncontroversial, several questions were posed in the online survey. Of those students surveyed, 65 percent reported they enjoyed deliberating controversial topics more than noncontroversial topics. The same percentage also reported they felt that they learned more from deliberating controversial topics. In the survey, two students reported a difference amongst the two questions however; one student enjoyed controversial topics more, but felt they learned better through noncontroversial topics and another student reported vice versa. For these two students, their responses indicated that despite what they might have preferred, they believed that they may have been better served discussing another type of topic. Therefore, the choice of controversial or issues considered to be open-ended in their resolution were more attractive and engaging to the students.

In addition to developing student interest, the choice of topic may also have an impact on the presence of different forms of critical reasoning. While the presidency and Electoral College

deliberations were narrow in the possible answers afforded to students, the debt deliberation was much more complex in potential solutions that could be proposed; students could combine solutions in a myriad of proposals. Thus, the number of new solutions being offered was much higher than the other deliberations. This may also have led to the higher count of students interjecting new problem-related information, 14 times for this deliberation in comparison to 14 for the other deliberations combined. Students also asked 15 clarification questions during this deliberation, which were four more questions posed than the other deliberations totaled together (see Table 10). In comparison, unlike the Electoral College and presidency deliberations, students were afforded the opportunity to be more creative and think “out-of-the-box” with the debt deliberation, which in return generated a higher count of certain critical reasoning skills.

Overall, each of the topics explored in the three deliberation iterations studied produced a different response from the students in comparison to the other topics. Students interpreted the limited options in the Electoral College deliberation as a negative component that restricted the potential of the discussion. Differing from the Electoral College topic, the debt deliberation allowed a vast possibility of solutions, which allowed the students to construct a multifaceted solution. In addition, based on the topic’s presence in the news, the students saw the deliberation as of importance and related to their current lives. Finally, the cross-curricular topic of presidential leadership appealed to some students as it permitted them to incorporate information learned from a variety of social studies courses. When examined collectively, the majority of students preferred topics such as these due to their potential for controversy.

Teacher facilitation

While the role of the teacher was not addressed by any of the research questions, the place of the teacher in structuring, facilitating, and assessing deliberations played a key role in evaluating how students' collective decision-making differed amongst the formats. Information regarding this role was gathered through primarily three data sources: transcripts of deliberations; transcripts of student interviews; and reflections produced by the teacher in the researcher journal. When examining the role of the teacher through my own viewpoint, I saw myself adopting all four roles of discussion leadership as defined by Wang (2008): intellectual leader; technical leader; managerial leader; and social leader. Each of these roles was incorporated in some capacity for all three of the deliberations, thus across the formats.

For the online deliberations, I initially viewed my role as being largely limited to an online presence and developing a guide to help students. Yet, I found myself each day during the online discussions spending several minutes in class addressing participation as well as meeting with students who were experiencing technology issues. Due to limited participation or various issues not brought forth in the discussion, I would show the class the online forum on the SMART Board to reveal who had participated as well as what had been stated; I would then encourage others to participate and brainstorm along with the students what additional topics may need to be discussed. In addition to these examples of social and intellectual leadership, I would address other technical and managerial issues that arose in the online discussions during class time, as opposed to troubleshooting while the students are online away from class. For instance, Lauren indicated to me during class while the presidency online deliberation was occurring that she had been contributing, but her comments were not appearing. After investigating, it was noted that she had switched email accounts that led to her new profile being seen as spam; thus, her comments were being collected in a spam folder rather than being posted

online. Another student, Irene, brought in a hand written contribution for the presidency online deliberation; she presented this to me while I was discussing about the class' online progress for the deliberation. She informed me that her computer had contracted a virus, thus she was unable to post; yet, she wrote a contribution to give to me as she did not want to lose points for not contributing. To help her, I allowed her to use my computer at the end of class to post her comment online so that other students could respond and consider her input. For my students, online deliberations required my active engagement in class as a means of seeking more and better engagement as well as addressing and correcting any technical issues online. This presence served as a counter to the problem encountered by Journell (2008) of the absent teacher online: a teacher who expects discussion but does little to facilitate or address questions of the students.

I found myself posing questions to the students in both formats, yet for different reasons at various times during the deliberations. For face-to-face deliberations, many of my questions would primarily be a means of redirection due to students becoming too narrow or misdirected. In the debt deliberation, for instance, the following exchange occurred in which my question served a more managerial intent:

Chris: I don't want to upset anyone, but I would say the EPA needs to go. Focusing on pollution, caring for the Earth, etc. could be stuff others can handle.

Matt: EPA's regulations have negative impacts on growth.

Peter: Then why is it there are European countries like Sweden and Switzerland that have far more stringent environmental restrictions than we do and are handling their debt much better than we are and all of their economic indicators are better.

Chris: Part of it is they are not acting as the world's policeman at the same time.

Luke: I don't think the EPA has that much influence on the economy or is that large of a portion of the debt.

Mr. Busbin: If you addressed regulations, how would this help solve the debt crisis?

I had interpreted the discussion as becoming too focused on the EPA; therefore, I presented a question that would connect the students' discussion to an issue that, in my opinion, would have better served the discussion as a whole. In addition to providing new directions, I would pose questions to individual students in an effort to spark their engagement. For instance, during the face-to-face component of the presidency deliberation, I sought to involve Helen in the discussion. Because she had not spoken yet in class, I wanted her to become engaged in the discussion to ensure more widespread participation in addition to my anticipation that she may have had something pertinent to contribute that would aid the discussion. The following exchange took place:

Mr. Busbin: What about other Reagan supporters? Helen, you supported Reagan on the blog, didn't you?

Helen: Yes, I was. I kind of like Reagan because he was a student of history. He knew that in the 1920s taxes were low and the economy was good, then taxes went up and the economy went bad. I also like the policies he put in place, he not only had short-term goals but a long-term vision unlike FDR, who while Social Security isn't probably what he it would be now and it has kind of taken a serious toll on our economy. So...

Helen's commentary, as expected was insightful; yet, without the invitation to participate, she may have chosen to remain quiet during the remainder of the deliberation. Such invitations helped introduce new insight that served the discussion well in addition to expanding the participation in the deliberation.

In contrast to my perspective of my role, some students interpreted my interaction in the face-to-face deliberations as threatening or as an obstacle to the class' ability to generate a decision. In their interviews, both Luke and Greg indicated that my questions or redirections posed a problem to their perception of group progress. Luke stated when asked whether or not he enjoyed the face-to-face deliberations, "I didn't really feel the discussions were constructive. A lot of times they didn't go deep enough. Someone or Mr. Busbin might take the discussion in

another direction and we never really got to the root of the problem.” Similar to Luke, Greg, when asked about the class’ ability to resolve certain specific issues in the debt deliberation, stated “Generally, no, just due to time constraints Mr. Busbin moved us on to other issues.” They interpreted what I thought was redirection towards more pertinent topics or the larger issues as depriving the class the ability to resolve specific conflicts within the larger issue. This was insightful to me as I had seen this as a managerial action as well as one directed by a desire to achieve a larger learning objective, yet these students saw it as interrupting their own learning. Yet, these comments came from two of the male students who participated at a much higher level than their peers, thus their beliefs about my role cannot be assumed to represent the majority of the class. Such concerns bring forth questions about the continuous internal dialogue I engage in while leading class discussions of how much guidance or input is necessary from me to ensure successful learning occurs.

Yet, for online deliberations, my questions served primarily as a means of furthering intellectual goals of the deliberation, such as having the students consider alternative perspectives. This is unlike the questions in face-to-face deliberations that sought to correctively redirect the discussion or expand participation. Also, unlike face-to-face deliberations, I included in my online commentary remarks that recognized or reinforced what I deemed good practice. For instance, in the online Electoral College deliberation, I posted the following contribution: “I love this conversation so far. Who are we concerned with though? Voters? The concept of democracy? Political parties?” In this post, I intended to reinforce what had occurred previously as well as spark discussion about stakeholders, an element of the deliberation thinking process that students had largely ignored. I also tried to post commentary that clarified content to ensure that students would not be misguided or misinformed; this did not happen often in the classroom

however as the lack of elaboration provided few opportunities for large inaccuracies to creep into the discussion as well as the immediate presence of peers provided a quick rebuttal to what some interpreted as misconceptions.

One difference amongst the formats involving my role as the teacher is the means by which students responded to my questions or clarification. Similar to the manner in which they responded to one another, students expressed more direct opposition to my thoughts online than in face-to-face deliberations. For instance, in the online portion of the presidency deliberation, Owen and Luke initially rejected the notion that any US president should be considered ideal, rather they insisted America needed either a socialistic or communist leader, and they therefore declined to answer the question. Luke initially wrote:

I believe that a 'president' as we know it can never be a good leader by my criteria. Being opposed to liberal democracy, my criteria are obviously very different from someone only thinking in the system...I come to the conclusion that all presidents have been abject failures, and will continue to be so as long as the current system is in place.

Owen built upon Luke's comments by writing:

Certainly, Luke. A president who works to maintain the capitalist-nationalist hegemony, as all have done, is a good leader for those in power, but in my view, is a terrible leader. This is what I mean when I say that a leader's goals must be considered, for a leader with shoddy goals can never become great by pursuing those goals.

As these students were bright and I desired for them to engage in the question posed, I asked them the following online: "@ Owen and Luke. Being politically realistic and considering feasibility, do you think your vision will ever occur? Considering our recent past, who has come closest to your goal? What about the New Frontier (JFK) or Great Society (LBJ)?" Owen, in response, simply stated "Mr. Busbin, yes, I do believe it will occur." Luke later posted:

@Mr. Busbin: Yes, I do think my vision of the future will occur. Revolutionary changes have come before, and I think it is safe to assume they will come again. To view society not as a historical progression based on system tendencies is to heavily distort our understanding, and leads us to conclude radical change is impossible.

Owen, once again, refused to engage in the class' deliberation question and dismissed my question with a short response. Luke provided a longer response that argued I had sought to manipulate the students' thinking and limit their political efficacy in seeking change; like Owen, Luke also did not respond to the question that class was grappling with online. During the Electoral College deliberations, Peter also responded rather frankly to questions I posed for the class. I posed the following question at one point, "If we move to a direct vote, is there any need to focus on rural populations? What would prevent a candidate from simply conducting a tarmac campaign?" Peter posted: "@Mr. Busbin: Rural populations have been coddled for far too long. I say let them become insignificant, as it should be. They should stick to what they are good at, being the butt of the jokes of their betters." In response to a question about considering the role of parties in the reforming of the Electoral College, Peter replied: "@Mr. Busbin: Parties are simply a means to an end, no one should be concerned about what happens to them." In both instances, Peter takes an aggressive stance on the question as he dismisses both notions in language that could be characterized as temperamental and blunt; in addition, he employs a cynical view of the topic, which undermines my choice, as the teacher, to have students weigh the questions as of importance. While Peter's points are valid, the language he uses to convey them to me was not seen in class; he did not answer questions posed by me in class in such a fashion. As evidenced by Luke, Owen, and Peter's statements, my contributions proved to be more susceptible to student attack online as opposed to in class. This behavior mirrors the belief expressed by students in the survey that they felt they could be much more honest online as well as they felt more comfortable to disagree online; yet, like how they treated their own peers, this honesty manifested itself in a bluntness that detracted from a positive environment.

While the online and face-to-face components of the blended format reflected what has already been stated, the blended format did require of me a new task that I had not experienced in the solely online or face-to-face deliberations. As I structured the deliberation, I recognized that I had two new challenges presented by the format. The first challenge was to ensure that the deliberation did not conclude itself online, thus providing an opportunity to further the discussion in class. Secondly, I had to develop a transition between the two components that would allow the face-to-face format to build off of what had been stated previously, rather than serving as a repetition of what had already been stated. These were challenges that little assistance was found to help guide me in based on research conducted for this study. To help overcome the first challenge, I sought for students to discuss what criteria they thought best defined presidential leadership as well as apply those criteria to individual presidents; it was my intention that they could be able to frame the discussion around a select few presidents, who would then be discussed further in class. As a means of surmounting the second challenge, I began the face-to-face deliberation with a recounting of the online component through a reading of several contributions as well as summarizing what had been stated and concluded. Prior to the face-to-face deliberation, I studied the online transcript to identify key themes, passages, and areas that were not addressed. This task reduced the available amount of time in class dedicated to the deliberation, yet it also ensured that the deliberation would progress forward rather than retracing previous topics.

While my role as the leader in the deliberations cannot be determined to have had a direct impact on the students' collective decision-making, it did impact the level and means of engagement in the discussions. All three formats required my active presence for a variety of purposes, such as seeking more participation to addressing technological impediments. Yet, it is

interesting to note the differences amongst the formats in the manner in which students interpreted and responded to my involvement. Some students, specifically those who monopolized the discussions, felt that my managerial redirection in face-to-face deliberations hampered their progress in reaching conclusions about certain topics within the larger issues. For online deliberations, students more actively responded in the negative to my contributions, unlike in face-to-face deliberations in which students did not dispute what I stated. Finally, as the leader in the blended deliberation, my role went beyond what I had experienced previously in that two new considerations, what order to place the formats in as well as how to avoid repeating what had been said in the previous component, had to be accounted for that were absent in the face-to-face and online only deliberations.

Student Decision-Making

As the study focused on the deliberation discussion format, a primary element of that model is the decision-making process that the participants undergo in response to the controversial political issue question posed to the group, often a “what should we do?” type-question (Parker and Zumeta, 1999; Hess, 2009). In teaching about deliberations, I stated that the ending point or goal of the deliberation process was to generate a collective answer to the problem, similar to how one expects a government body to generate a response. In my own vision of the process, the deliberations would conclude with a majority of students agreeing upon a generated solution. It was my expectation that such a solution would be the learning product from this process.

To understand if my anticipatory goal of a collective decision were met, I chose several means to analyze the extent to which this was achieved. Thus, the three deliberation iterations,

along with the pre and post-deliberation writing assignments were analyzed for evidence of students working together to create a common response to the posed policy question as well as for evidence of student thinking shifting to reflect a more general consensus. In student interviews, the prompt “Explain the decision or understanding about the question that you believe the class was able to create by the end of the deliberation” was posed to students; responses to this prompt as well as other follow-up questions were analyzed and compared to the deliberation transcripts and analysis of the pre and post-deliberation writing assignments to address the ability of students to reach a collective decision.

Overall, student decision-making in deliberations rarely reflected a collective or unified process; the class, as a whole, failed to come to a unified position on any of the issues. By examining both the pre and post-writing samples by the students, it became evident the extent to which students’ answers in respect to the posed controversial political issue question changed during the deliberation or as a result of the deliberation. Based on this analysis, the majority of students maintained their perspective or policy preference that they possessed prior to the initiation of each deliberation. The student responses in their pre and post-deliberation assignments are outlined in Table 10. With the adherence of some students to their initial position during and after the deliberation, the students’ position preference can be said to have served as an obstacle or influence on the deliberation process in addition to the variances between online, face-to-face, and blended discussion formats.

Table 10: Comparison of Student Pre and Post Deliberation Answers to Controversial Political Issue Question

Name	Electoral College Pre-Deliberation Assignment	Electoral College Post-Deliberation Assignment	Debt Pre-Deliberation Assignment	Debt Post-Deliberation Assignment	Presidency Pre-Deliberation Assignment	Presidency Post-Deliberation Assignment
Greg	Proportional Plan	Proportional Plan	Cut spending; raise taxes	Raise taxes (flat); cut wasteful spending; efficiency evaluations	FDR	FDR
Owen	Direct vote	Direct vote	Entitlement reform; raise taxes (rich); cut defense	Entitlement reform; raise taxes (rich); cut defense	FDR	FDR
Mary	Direct vote	Direct vote	Raise taxes	Cut spending	FDR	FDR
Matt	**	Do nothing	Privatize entitlements	Privatize entitlements; cut regulations	Reagan	Reagan
Irene	Proportional Plan	Do nothing	Entitlement reform	Entitlement reform; reduce discretionary spending; tax raises	Kennedy	Reagan

Adam	Proportional Plan	Proportional Plan	Close tax loopholes; reform defense spending	Close tax loopholes; cut defense spending; entitlement reform	FDR	FDR
Jane	Proportional Plan	Proportional Plan	Raise income taxes	Raise income taxes; cut spending; reform Social Security	FDR	FDR
Mark	**	Proportional Plan	Raise excise tax	Raise excise tax	**	Truman
Helen	Do nothing	Do nothing	Reform Social Security and Medicare; cut defense; raise payroll tax	Reform Social Security and Medicare; cut defense	Reagan	Reagan
John	Proportional plan	Proportional plan	Entitlement reform	Entitlement reform	Truman	FDR
Monica	Proportional plan	Direct vote	Raise taxes; excise tax; cut programs; close loopholes	Raise taxes; excise tax; cut programs; close loopholes; entitlement reform	FDR	FDR

Brigid	Do nothing	Direct vote	Raise taxes; cut spending	Privatize Social Security	FDR	FDR
Lauren	Direct vote	Direct vote	Tax adjustments (increase rich; decrease poor)	Tax adjustments (increase rich; decrease poor)	FDR	FDR
Luke	Direct vote	Direct vote	Default; do not reimburse bond holders; collective decision-making	Default; do not reimburse bond holders; collective decision-making	FDR	FDR
Chris	Direct vote	Do nothing	Reduce deficit spending	Cut programs; freeze federal salary, federal layoffs	Reagan	Reagan
Peter	Direct vote	Direct vote	Raise taxes (rich)	Raise taxes (rich)	FDR	FDR
Steven	Do nothing	Do nothing	Privatize Social Security	Privatize Social Security	FDR	FDR
Will	Do nothing	Proportional Plan	Large increase in taxes (flat level)	Flat tax; entitlement reform; defense cuts	Reagan	Reagan

Ruth	Do nothing	**	Cut spending; raise taxes; balanced budget amendment	Reform Social Security and Medicare (privatize)	**	Truman
Paul	**	**	Kenysian economics boost economy	Abolish taxation; print more money; promote inflation	**	**

**Did not complete assignment

Each of the deliberations differed in the extent to which they produced a collective decision. Various factors shaped the degree to which such a decision became apparent or did not, which includes choices I made including the topic itself, guidance in the deliberation, and classroom environment. Student opinion and manner in which they interpreted the deliberation exercise also influenced the production of a class decision. The iterations discussed below in respect to the manner in which a decision was or was not produced.

At the commencement of the Electoral College deliberation, students offered three solutions both in the deliberation and their pre-deliberation writing assignment: do nothing, adopt the proportional plan, and move to a direct, popular vote. No other solutions were offered for consideration during the deliberation, except for the consideration of limiting faithless electors in the current model; students did not consider the other two solutions, which were the National Bonus Plan or the Congressional District Method. Faithless electors, which were not identified in the pre-deliberation assignments, were first brought up as an argument for moving towards a direct vote by Owen who wrote:

Many of you sound like you're encouraging faithless voters. With the EC, one can have all the faithless voters (close to what it seems the intention), no faithless voters (pretty close to what we have now), or some mix. The first and third are undemocratic, and the second is what it seems many of you want to modify into the proportional system. If there are no faithless voters (as having them is undemocratic) in the proportional plan (PP), then there is no reason not to move straight to direct vote (DV).

Yet, the subject of simply limiting their presence rather than overhauling the entire system was broached only once by Mark and Jane:

Mark: Faithless electors intrigue me; even though there are laws punishing them and they have not changed the outcome of elections, there are 158+ faithless electors since 1796, and there are 26 states that have no laws to punish. It does not change the outcome, but how in the world they, who unsuccessfully and conspiratorially represented the people, are not punished in some states?

Jane: I agree with Mark. The current Electoral College is so open to corruption; I think an excellent way to reduce the possibility of such is to reform it so that the Electoral College is a direct representation of the popular vote.

Thus, while faithless electors were brought up several times by advocates of direct voting, the discussion of limiting their presence as a reform option in and of itself was only discussed once.

Therefore, faithless electors should not be considered as a solution heavily considered by the students. Only one student acknowledged or stated a change in opinion during the deliberation.

Monica, in her initial post to the deliberation, stated:

I agree with Jane that the proportional system seems to be the most sensible and accurate. The current system is not very accurate in the direct vote of the people. I think that the EC has too much power in that it can change the outcomes of elections. With a proportional system, the people's-votes will be better represented-and it will also benefit third parties, unlike the EC that favors only two candidates.

Four days later following her initial pronouncement in favor of the proportional system, Monica posted her second statement:

Earlier I said that I though proportional was the best option because it was a step towards direct voting and purely because it was more efficient-but if direct voting is obtainable by all means I think that it is the best option. It is obviously the most democratic and best represents what the people want. The government's job is to serve the people and with the EC that is not being done. And if we are going to take the time to reform the election system (which is needed)-why change to something like a proportional plan which will be just as open to corruption. You might as well completely get rid of the middle man and go to direct voting.

Monica's preference shift was the only occurrence during any of the three observed deliberations of a student making a change known to their peers. Following the conclusion of the Electoral College deliberation, four students changed their preferences from what was indicated in the pre-deliberation assignment to what they wrote in their post-deliberation writing assignment, which asked students to write about what they felt was the best solution. The ability to determine if more students changed their minds was limited by four of the twenty students not submitting either a pre or post-deliberation writing assignment. By comparing pre and post-deliberation writing assignments, the percentage of students advocating for the adoption of the proportional plan slid from 35 percent to 33 percent, those supporting the current model increased from 24 percent to 27 percent, and supporters of the direct vote model decreased from 41 percent to 39

percent. Therefore, the evidence from the pre and post-deliberation assignments suggests that students did reflect on what was written in this deliberation, yet few revealed a change of opinion on what served as the best solution to the controversial political issue of the Electoral College.

The debt deliberation, which offered more possible solutions and combinations of solutions in comparison to the Electoral College deliberation, proved more difficult to track in terms of percentages of agreement. Twelve of the twenty students adjusted their policy solutions, as recorded in their pre-deliberation assignment, following the completion of this face-to-face deliberation. Yet, of these twelve, only three underwent whole transformations of belief between their pre and post-deliberation writing activities; for example, Mary shifted from a revenue-increasing position to the belief that spending needs to be drastically cut. The other nine students expanded their preferred policy solutions by either adding solutions to their previous position prior to the deliberation or expanding on their prior solution by enhancing the details, such as Greg's position enhancement from simply cutting spending to instituting an efficiency program to determine wasteful spending. In an interview, Greg described the position of the class as a whole as "most people generally agree with each other, but on the details." Yet, his statement also reveals the limited extent to which students agreed on the topic, while many acknowledged the need for reforming entitlement and tax structure along with identifying areas to cut, they lacked specific agreement on what to do. Similar to the Electoral College deliberation, the evidence from this deliberation suggests that students listened to and considered others' contributions during the discussion resulting in changed positions as well as enhanced understanding of the topic.

One difference in the debt deliberation however was the ability to adopt multiple solutions; thus, many students maintained their original position but borrowed ideas from other

students during the deliberation to construct a more elaborate response. Thus, unlike the Electoral College, students did not have to change their initial position but could expand upon their beliefs. This ability derived from the topic selection; while the Electoral College offered a limited number of solutions which could only be implemented individually, the debt problem provided the ability for students to address it with a multitude of solutions mixed together.

The final deliberation observed for the study, the question of which modern president best exemplified presidential leadership, produced the least changes in the viewpoint of students. Prior to the beginning of the deliberation, most students identified either Franklin D. Roosevelt (65 percent) or Ronald Reagan (24 percent) as the best example in their pre-deliberation assignment, with one student liking Harry Truman and another advocating for John F. Kennedy. During the deliberation, student preferences were quite evident; the deliberation primarily focused on Roosevelt and Reagan. Luke identified this reality midway through the face-to-face component of the presidency deliberation when he stated, “So, I guess it really is just between Reagan and FDR. Those are really the only presidents I have heard suggested.” Following the conclusion of the discussion, only two students shifted their thinking in their post-deliberation essay: one student shifted from Kennedy to Reagan and the other student shifted from Truman to FDR. Two students who did not complete the prewriting exercise identified Truman as the president they felt best exemplified presidential leadership in their post-deliberation essay; these recognitions are intriguing in that Truman was never a central focus of the deliberation and that he was chosen by both students who did not complete the pre-deliberation assignment. Like the Electoral College deliberation, students primarily maintained their preselected option from the limited range of choices available. While student political ideology was not tracked during the study or as part of the class, it is interesting to note how students chose two presidents who are

often seen as heroes of a respective ideology. This limited shifting of opinion is similar to the Electoral College deliberation in that students did not have the luxury of creating a combination of solutions, but rather had to choose one option.

In each of the deliberations studied, student discussion did not follow the prescribed outline of the deliberation process. The process, as intended, was designed to help students collectively reason about a complex political issue and generate an informed position. The eight-step or three-phase outline (see Table 1), while being taught in class through various activities along with its structure reinforced in the post-writing process, did not manifest itself in its chronological or outlined order in each discussion. Therefore, in each of the deliberations, it was not clear during the discussion process if students would reach what might be considered as a clear, defining position collectively or if they would be able to systematically address a policy issue by establishing collective criteria for success, addressing the viewpoints of varying parties involved, weighing the advantages and disadvantages of offered solutions, deciding upon one solution as the best option, and then determining its acceptance and feasibility. As part of my reflection upon my own role in the deliberation process, I question the open discussion format that was utilized; perhaps, a discussion broken into separate, distinct phases with more focused questions going beyond the deliberation issue would foster greater fidelity to the model or purpose.

Despite lacking adherence to the model as a step-by-step process, elements reflective of the different steps and phases appeared throughout the deliberations. For instance, Peter addressed the implementation and feasibility concerns of initiating the proportional plan by writing:

Any change toward a proportional system would have to be on a national scale, doing it on a state-by-state basis would dilute the political power of the dominant party in each state, meaning that you would have to defeat the dominant party in almost every state. Doing it on a national basis would mean less of an uphill battle. Obviously changing the Electoral College [sic] votes per state would require a constitutional amendment, and if you have the political power to do that then you probably have the political power to force the states to use fully proportional systems.

Many times the feasibility and acceptance of certain solutions were used to justify one's proposed solution or to critique that of another student, such as in the example above. Peter responded to assertions by Greg and Jane that a direct vote was improbable because it would require a constitutional amendment. Rather than working through the political issue systematically in their discussions, different elements of the deliberation phases were used to rationalize a student's position at varying points. Matt, who supported maintaining the Electoral College, brought forth a discussion on the impact of a direct vote reform at the very end of the deliberation concluding:

The country in its current state make it way too easy for a candidate to run a tarmac campaign if we had a direct vote. 82% of the country resides in a suburb or a city, with this demographic and a gullible public the candidate that lies and promises the most will usually win. Again, why should we attempt to fix what is not broken... This government of the people directly voting on everything would yield poor results. The people would pillage the government and the land that they live on before they know what would have hit them.

At the beginning, Matt appears to be speaking on behalf of rural voters, a stakeholder group to consider when discussing reforming the Electoral College, in a manner that seems considerate of their needs. Yet, Matt asserted the belief that abolishing the Electoral College is unwise because the American citizenry is too ignorant to choose a president by themselves. This dichotomy illustrates the willingness by students to consider elements of the deliberation model to better suit their own needs in convincing others that their policy preference is best; this differs from using the model or phases in a disciplined manner to produce a more thorough and reflective decision. Students did address many of the deliberations steps in their post-deliberation writing assignments following the prescribed outline and sample provided to them (see Appendix B).

However, by not maintaining this outline during the deliberations, the students struggled to develop a linear progress in their discussions, which led to jumping from topic to topic, failure to work within a set framework of understanding, and a rush to decide how everyone felt about the topics as a whole.

As explored previously in the discussion on student leadership, some students put forth efforts to lead the class in a decision-making process, yet this was rarely sustained. At the end of the face-to-face debt deliberation and last component of the presidency blended deliberation, students engaged in a counting of student preferences at the end of each deliberation. Yet, such a process could not have at that point in the process served as a means of helping the class reach a unified position. Rather, it served to simply ascertain where everyone stood at the conclusion of the deliberation. Students who took on the leadership tasks at the end of the deliberation appeared to have done so more as a means of bringing the deliberation to a conclusion as opposed to helping guide the students to a collective decision.

Some frustration was expressed about the inability to reach a decision. In his interview, Luke stated in response to a question about whether he felt the class was able to come to a decision in any of the deliberations:

We don't really have a mechanism for making a decision. We don't really know what that would entail. Sometimes we do a majority vote at the end when someone says, 'Why don't we take a vote?' because we have been talking about everything and we haven't made a decision yet.

Luke's quote reflects a comment that I wrote on my own notes during the debt deliberation:

What can I do to structure discussions differently? Do I need to be more involved to get them to a decision? Or, should a decision be a natural outflow from the discussion? Is a decision always evident or it is more concealed in the discussion?

The deliberation-style of discussion sought for the students to grapple with an issue that asks them to create a response. Yet, I failed to give any pre-consideration to structuring these

discussions differently from a Socratic seminar beyond writing question scripts, which included questions representative of the varying steps. In reflecting on Luke's commentary and my own note, the ability to derive a collective response and move students beyond their initial positions may have required a different approach to facilitating or managing the discussion on the part of the teacher. Luke's quote also reveals a sense of frustration during the deliberations that led to the agenda-setting role of the students at the end of the deliberations. Luke appeared to have wanted the "talking" to have been in a direction towards a decision, yet when that did not occur, he felt the class reluctantly took a vote. Thus, the student's struggle to adopt an agenda and a decision-making apparatus reflected in part the structure of the deliberations.

Another possible obstacle to student collective decision-making could have been the strength of student adherence to their beliefs. In the Electoral College deliberation, student efforts towards collectively working together in developing a communal decision seemed stifled by opposition to certain viewpoints. During the deliberation, Greg and Mark advocated for a proportional system as a compromise between those advocating for direct election and those seeking to maintain the Electoral College. Greg wrote:

If anything, the EC only needs a more democratic reform for now since it fulfills its job for the most part. A proportional plan would be an excellent way to prepare for a later direct vote amendment because it would help facilitate the creation of a larger voting populace. People would feel their votes actually mattered and the current EC could reform to provide equal opportunity to voters. Eventually the EC could be phased out but only after we could assess how successful the more democratic voting system would turnout in a proportional EC.

Mark more directly advocated a compromise when he wrote, "While options should be considered with deep thinking, I think it is better if we take the middle ground that is less controversial: proportional system." Owen, following both of their proposals, posed the question, "Why is it better if we take the middle ground?" When Monica stated that she had changed her mind to support direct election, Owen stated, "Well said, Monica; others would be wise to take

note.” This statement reflects an “us” versus “them” mentality regarding policy positions that entered the deliberation. The negativity prevented a thorough, and fair, evaluation of the policy options laid before the group. It may have also discouraged others from feeling comfortable expressing their genuine beliefs. While deliberations should not be a negotiation in which students compromise but possibly ignore what is in the interests of the common good, students must be open to hearing and exploring the opinions of others (Parker, 2003).

With the heavy presence of critical reasoning dealing with justifying one’s position as well as the frequent occurrences of students disagreeing with others, the evidence from these three deliberations suggests that some students saw these deliberations as more of a competitive debate or a performance in which they sought to promote their own views over those of others while being unwilling to entertain other positions. Students echoed these conclusions in their interviews. When asked if he liked the class deliberations, Luke said, “I really like to give my opinion.” To Luke, the deliberation was an opportunity to put forth what he believed. In her assessment of student opinions on the Electoral College deliberation, Helen felt that students were “either for keeping it or abolishing it.” Complementing Luke’s statement, Helen noted how students were opinionated and vocal about their preferences as opposed to being more explorative about the possible options and dimensions of the issue as a whole. Students did not seek or encourage others to bring in outside information, which may have produced a more informative deliberation. The absence of certain forms of critical reasoning supports this notion.

The lingering question regarding student decision-making along with the role of the teacher is “how well did the students understand the goal or theory behind deliberation?” As the teacher, I sought to embed in the students the concept of working together to make a decision as well as, in my own eyes, stress the difference between deliberation and debate. Yet, students did

not adopt the same mindset as seen through the disagreements and challenges that occurred during the deliberation as well as the lack of a unified mindset expressed in the post-deliberation writings. A variety of adjustments or approaches may assist in shifting the thinking and approach that many students took in these assignments. For instance, students could be assigned leadership roles, rather than assume them when they felt that leadership was necessary; an example would be a student given the task of collecting possible solutions from the class while creating a list of the identified tradeoffs of each solution. Another potential, and easily achievable, addition to the process would have been to allow the students to create a formal agenda prior to the actual deliberation as a guide for their discussion. While these two changes may aid in creating a more organized deliberation, students do not necessarily better grasp the foundations and purposes of deliberation as a means of furthering or characterizing America's democracy as a result of these implementations.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I sought to introduce the primary findings from this study while using data to illustrate these findings. The manner in which students participated in the deliberation process, including their participation, critical thinking, and interaction with one another, was explored in detail while also being compared across the formats of online, face-to-face, and blended formats of discussion. In addition, if the opportunity presented itself, these findings were related to existing literature that either asserts similar beliefs or that my own findings contradict. The following chapter will seek to summarize these findings while relating these to the study's limitations, alternative explanations, and implications for the education community.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, LIMITATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

This study focused on the impact of format on the ability of high school students to collectively deliberate on controversial political issues. In order to frame this exploration, the following question was posed: *how does students' group decision-making, when deliberating controversial political issues, differ between face-to-face, online, and blended deliberations?* The three formats investigated included online only, face-to-face only, and a blended format, which allowed students to participate initially online followed by a face-to-face meeting.

Previous literature, which was explored in Chapter Two, demonstrates that there is ample evidence identifying differences between these formats varying from structural to emotional responses by students. Yet, little evidence existed demonstrating their effect on the deliberation of controversial political issues in a secondary social studies classroom. I chose to explore the possible impacts of these formats as a means of enhancing the ability of social studies teachers to make informed decisions about the manner in which they construct class discussions. Adding to the existing literature on the differences between these formats with the more narrowed focus on the deliberation design, I felt that this study would provide those interested in social studies classroom practice as well as educational technology with insight derived from individual students' experiences along with the perspective of the teacher as they engaged with these curriculum methods. Any insight gained would lead these individuals to a more informed assessment regarding the decisions they make within the confines of their own class or school.

Previous chapters developed this study through introducing the investigation, exploring the existing literature on the topics being studied, establishing the methods used to conduct the

study, and describing the results of the implemented research. In this chapter, the implications of the study are explored. The findings presented in chapter four are summarized and placed within the context of existing literature. As a means of identifying why this study may not be transferable to other teachers' experiences, the limitations of the research are identified as well as alternative explanations for the findings are presented. Following these discussions, as implied by the purpose of this study in the eyes of the researcher, the implications of the conducted research for the benefit of the social studies education field as well as for the educational technology field are introduced along with recommendations for further research that can enhance the understanding of these topics.

Summary

This study posed one primary research question along with three sub-research questions that related to the greater topic-at-hand. In order to produce evidence by which to explore these questions, this study examined the experiences of one Advanced Placement US Government and Politics class through three different deliberation iterations each using a different hosting format for each implementation. Twenty students participated in the study. I served as the teacher of these students to help construct problem-based units in which the controversial political issues were embedded as well as to decrease possible limitations associated with the facilitation of the deliberations (Journell, 2008).

Each deliberation allowed me several means of collecting evidence. To help identify student thinking about the topic before and after the deliberation, I asked students to complete pre and post-deliberation writing assignments (please see Appendix A and Appendix B). I coded and analyzed each deliberation transcripts for elements of critical thinking about the

controversial political issue as well as evidence supporting or refuting the ability of students to collectively make decisions about these issues (see Appendix G for coding guide). I kept notes during these units and deliberations to provide firsthand insight, observations, and thoughts regarding the experiences and comments of the class during these iterations. To help provide evidence of students' preferences regarding the deliberation formats as well as the topics discussed, students completed a survey. Six of the students also participated in a one-on-one interview with an outside researcher. These data sources provided a thorough base of information for evaluating the class' experiences with the three deliberation formats.

The first sub-question asked: *To what extent are students capable of reaching a collective decision during deliberation of a controversial political issue?* This question was primarily investigated by examining whether or not students' thinking about the issues shifted during the deliberation and whether the class was able to work together in formulating an agreed-upon stance. Based on the evidence collected and analyzed, a majority of students maintained their initial beliefs throughout the deliberation despite the presentation of new interpretations and perspectives by their peers. Yet, this did not mean that their thinking was not influenced by the experience. Students articulated that as a result of participating in the deliberations that their understanding of their own beliefs as well as the topic was enhanced. The class' ability to reach a collective decision encountered several obstacles that may help explain why the class did not reach a consensus. Students struggled in both formats to adhere to the deliberation model as a means of guiding their discussion and developing a means for surveying the opinions of their peers. While online, students more frequently failed to adhere to a consistent line of discussion, rather verging into other topics with no apparent transition or referencing back to previous discussion that may have occurred several days beforehand. To counter this lack of a clear

pathway forwards, at various points in the face-to-face and blended iterations, students took it upon themselves to exercise leadership in setting the discussion agenda. Another obstacle of greater concern is the attitude presented by several students towards the beliefs of their peers as well as their monopolization of the discussions; vehement disagreement and other means of intimidation by a limited group of outspoken students produced a tension in the deliberations and led to several students refraining from participating in their fullest capacities. This impediment proved difficult to overcome and has emerged in much of the analysis. While structural concerns regarding the implementation existed, these students' attitudes represented the most direct threat to the success of the deliberation as they challenged the concepts of openness, equality, and cooperation that are essential to a democratic deliberation (Parker, 2003; Hess, 2009; Gutmann and Thompson, 2004). Overall, each of these findings is representative of class dynamics and choices made by both the students and myself, the teacher; thus, they are individualistic of this class.

Seeking to understand how students cognitively participate in the deliberations as well as if this cognitive presence varies amongst formats, the second sub-question was posed: *when students are deliberating, what types of critical reasoning are most evident in the three formats?* Students demonstrated a keen ability to construct arguments in favor of their favored positions as well as critique those who preferred alternatives. In doing so, students identified evidence and examples of why their position was superior as well as utilized projected consequences and benefits of implementing certain plans to justify their reasoning. These were most evident online where students focused much of their contributions on justifying their own beliefs or discrediting those of their peers. In several interviews, students explained that their ability to better expound upon their own beliefs online was the result of a greater comfort developing arguments in this

environment, which affords them time and the absence of peer intimidation. Students also used varying questioning strategies to identify weaknesses in others' arguments or to probe for inconsistencies; yet, questioning and the often-resulting exchange between students appeared primarily in the face-to-face format. However, in examining the use of critical reasoning to foster collective decision-making throughout the formats, students rarely sought alternative opinions and outside research; rather, they were sometimes dismissive of others' attempts to introduce such and, at times, discourteous in doing so. While what was said and the opinions produced were specific to those in the study, the aforementioned trends, most noticeably the emphasis on one's own opinion, have been observed in previous studies (Brice, 2002; Meyer, 2007; Larson and Keiper, 2002). Thus, how students cognitively respond to the formats remains largely consistent with what has already been established.

A third sub-question was posed that sought to understand if topic choice influenced student engagement or their ability to reach a collective decision in deliberations. The question was: *how does the choice of topic influence the student's participation in the deliberation?* While the research methods employed yielded little evidence in relation to this question, some insight was gained and conclusions derived. Overall, students revealed a greater enjoyment participating in the debt and presidency deliberations. The Electoral College deliberation seemed too limiting in what students felt they needed to consider in addressing the issue as well as the range of solutions offered. Students expressed an ability to connect with topics that were newsworthy or current events, as seen in the choice of the national debt as a subject. In addition, students appreciated the complexity of multifaceted subjects like the presidency deliberation; this was similar to opinions given by students in Hess' (2009) examination of how students interpreted or enjoyed deliberative exercises in the classroom. The debt deliberation possessed a variety of

approaches to addressing the question, which then afforded the students the opportunity to construct a varied solution to the problem; thus, in this case, more students altered their pre-deliberation position to incorporate newly introduced ideas creating a hybrid solution. Yet, it remains unanswered if the agreement or narrowing of solutions in the two more complex deliberations were a result of the students truly finding consensus on certain resolutions to the issues or students compromising further investigation of the topic and perspectives in a pursuit of making the task easier cognitively.

Another key finding that shaped the variance amongst the formats as well as the ability for students to come to a collective decision was student participation and the reasons that led students to choose to engage. Participation patterns differed amongst the formats with a more limited number of students dominating the face-to-face discussions while a greater sense of equal participation permeated throughout the online iterations. Yet, online deliberations also saw a more reduced participation overall as many students adhered to the minimum requirements; the problem of how to engage students away from class while maintaining an organized set of established behaviors or expectations has been a problem encountered by numerous researchers exploring online discussion (Palmer et al., 2008; Jeong and Frazier, 2007).

My role in structuring and leading the deliberations also shaped the student experience from its impact on topic choice to the method in which the controversial political issue was discussed. While I interpreted my own role to have allowed for more student-direction and control over the deliberations, I believe that, if I were to replicate this study, I may exert more control over the deliberations in respect to the sub-topics and agenda being set for discussion; such control would aid in leading the students towards a timely and productive conclusion. In addition, the manner in which I viewed deliberation for this study as a culminating experience

would shift as I believe the process has potential in being divided and embedded in other areas of the unit.

Overall, each of these factors influenced the outcomes of this study in multiple, complex manners that are specific to the individuals involved in this study, thus making it difficult to corroborate these findings directly with other studies.

Alternative Explanations

While the findings and results presented in chapter four best represents the evidence collected in the opinion of this researcher, they do not claim to be a flawless explanation of what occurred amongst the three iterations. The analysis of the evidence is through the eyes' of the researcher, thus exposed to bias and interpretation. Alternative explanations are possible that may provide other understandings of what occurred as opposed to those presented previously. These substitute explanations deal primarily with producing more insight into why students participated in different degrees from one another.

While I interpreted the quietness of some students as a result of possible social tension or fear of judgment by others in the class, I dismissed the explanation or belief that the quietness of the students may have been their means of heightened engagement; while several students indicated they enjoyed listening, I did not conclude this was a universal attitude. Students who did not participate may have been thoroughly digesting the information presented in the class rather than remaining aloof from what was occurring in the classroom. Perhaps, they enjoyed listening to their peers more so than talking during class. This attitude was not directly analyzed through the survey, which would have provided a measure of all of the participants; therefore, it was difficult to ascertain the beliefs of the class as a whole.

Another possible explanation for variances in engagement and participation is rooted in the prior classroom experiences of the students. Uneven exposure to problem-based learning and discussion in the classroom may account for the discrepancies in participation (Dull and Murrow, 2008; Hahn, 1999; Onosko, 1991). Such variances in exposure could also account for the inability of certain students to generate certain components of critical thinking, such as arguing by analogy, on a consistent basis. Having taught at the school in which this study took place for five years prior to the conducting of this study, I have become accustomed to understanding that each teacher prepares students differently rather than embracing a singular curriculum approach. Some teachers promote discussion in the classroom, while others tend to maintain a more “traditional” role of direct instruction in which discussion is often limited and does not take a central part in the class. In addition, not all teachers promote problem-based learning, thus choosing to promote information as factual and not to be questioned or interpreted. Students with more experience discussing issues in the classroom as well as those having more opportunities to take part in problem-based learning may have felt more comfortable participating than others in this class. Students’ previous exposure to classroom discussion and problem-based learning was not surveyed, thus preceding experience cannot be discounted as an influence or factor in the results of the deliberations.

A final variable that may have impacted the degree to which students participated is the topic choice. While explored in detail towards the conclusion of chapter four, the question remains unanswered for many of the students who participated in the study if their engagement in the class deliberations was a result of the topic selection. For instance, Adam, who promoted himself as a “military buff,” may have been more inclined to participate in a deliberation that centered on a question of military engagement. Luke’s disinterest or distaste for topics about

American government may have produced his more negative attitude. Yet, this explanation would arise in any study as one cannot cater the course to meet each individual interest of its students.

While each of the aforementioned explanations could certainly offer further and divergent insight into the behavior of the class during the deliberations, the analysis described in chapter four provides a thorough telling of this class' experiences throughout their encounters with deliberation. Several of these explanations could be either confirmed or dismissed with certain alterations to the research procedure. Yet, their existence is also a result of certain choices and factors that arose during this study, which has prevented the production of optimal data or classroom environment.

Limitations

This study has several limitations that impact its ability to provide a more thorough and informative picture of deliberation across the three formats. Most notably, this study is limited by the number of subjects and iterations observed. Only one class was used for this study rather than multiple classes taught by various teachers, thus the sample utilized lacked strength. However, in choosing to limit the sample, it prevented another possible limitation: differences in teacher instruction and implementation of discussion formats. Besides observing just one class, this study focused on only one deliberation in each format. By observing only one iteration of each format, the ability to present more evidence characterizing a said format and identify connections between repetitions of the format is unfeasible. Yet, the division of the blended format into its two separate components provided some further insight into the online and face-to-face formats. This limitation however is illustrative of the nature of problem-based learning and deliberation:

to develop a thorough problem-based learning unit and prepare students to discuss a complex, controversial political issue requires a great deal of class time limiting the number of opportunities to take part in such experiences.

Another limitation was the students themselves. The class observed was a senior Advanced Placement course, which implies the students are academically more superior to their peers. Many had already been in other social studies Advanced Placement courses, which have the potential to foster critical thinking due to the structure of the course. By using an Advanced Placement class, it becomes more difficult to take the experiences described in this study and translate them to possible meanings and implications for the non-Advanced Placement classroom. However, other problems encountered in this study with the students themselves could be easily understood as having the possibility of occurring in any classroom, regardless of academic ability. In this study, access to technology did not pose a problem as each student had a computer and Internet access at home, yet some did encounter occasional access issues that reflected common obstacles like power outages or computer viruses; however, such universal access cannot be expected to exist in every class thus posing a problem for teachers wishing to embrace online deliberation.

In addition to the advanced nature of the class, the personalities of the students may have limited the results of the study. The forceful nature of several students, a small minority of the class as a whole, may have changed the behavior of others in a manner that impacted their contributions. By these students introducing a negative tone, other discussants may have either felt compelled to conform to what was seen as acceptable to these few students or tempered their own responses to avoid confrontation. The monopolization of the face-to-face discussion by a select group of well-informed students also limited the opportunity for others to speak due to the

time taken up by their contributions as well as the belief by some students that they could not discuss the topic at a level compatible with these few students. Yet, the impact of these occurrences may be an experience limited to this one class. From experiences with class deliberations in an Advanced Placement US Government course in previous years, negative commentary as well as the domination of discussion by a minority of students did not frequently occur; thus, one must consider the students, with their personalities and relationships with other students, as a critical variable that may impact the success of the deliberation. Yet, this limitation reaffirms the notion that class environment is critical to the success of deliberating controversial political issues in a productive, collective manner (Parker, 2003; Hess, 2009; Johnston et al., 1994).

While this study was piloted in a limited fashion several years earlier, some of the methods employed were not perfect in capturing what was intended to be observed. The interview format did not follow the outlined procedure that had been originally intended. While it would have been ideal to conduct the interviews myself, the generosity of the school district in allowing me to study my own class as well as standard rules of human subject protocol limited my ability to interview my own students in regards to their experiences. Thus, an outside interviewer had to be used. The use of this researcher resulted in several deviations from the originally conceived protocol. First, by asking the interviewer to plan interviews with the students based on commonalities in their schedules, the researcher did not meet with students as frequently as would have been hoped; while interviews were planned to occur following each observed iteration, none of the interviews took place until after the second iteration occurred. Four of the interviews did not take place until after the third iteration. It was intended that each iteration would be followed by a set of interviews with the same students throughout the study.

Had this occurred, more information specific to each format and topic may have been produced providing greater insight to students' personal beliefs regarding their experiences. The interviewer also took some liberties deviating from the script that had been rehearsed; in the transcription process, several questions and responses were dismissed due to leading by the interviewer. Thus, while producing some worthy evidence that was used for analysis, the interviews did not meet their full potential therefore limiting the ability to procure the beliefs of students in regards to their participation across a variety of deliberation formats.

While these limitations hampered the ability to investigate fully the experiences of this class as well as produce a population that could be more typical of the average classroom, they did not restrain the collection of an adequate amount of data to help provide a basis for thorough analysis. In addition, in designing this study, the notion that any results would be largely generalizable was not an adopted assumption; rather, the study sought to explore the experiences of one specific class, thus providing a basis or framework for future research to occur, which could then perhaps be seen as generalizable.

Implications

The completion of this study helps serve two different research fields in education, which can be seen as interrelated or separate. This study provides further insight into the experiences and abilities of students to interact amongst each other in their discussion of controversial political issues, a significant component of problem-based learning. Secondly, the study contains implications for the implementation of problem-based discussion, more specifically the deliberation model, across three different technology-based formats: face-to-face only; online only; and a blended format. Such implications have the capacity to influence both the social

studies and educational technology fields as well as raise more questions to be answered. Three primary implications can be derived from this study regarding students' collective decision-making, classroom dynamics, and discussion format.

Collective decision-making and critical thinking. In this study, the ability of students to interact with one another in their engagement of controversial political issues was examined closely. The students in this study serve as rebuttals to the concerns that Leming (2003) and Posner (McCaffery, et al., 2004) express about the ability of students and citizens to reason critically about complex political issues. The students produced deep and meaningful arguments about the issues introduced as well as engaged in enlightening discussions about the sub-topics contained within the larger subjects. This suggests that students, when provided a curriculum framework supportive of exploring controversial issues, may engage in discussions that reflect the ideals of engaged citizenship in the manner of critical thinking. Yet, it must also be kept in mind that these students chose to take an Advanced Placement course, which may speak of a higher cognitive ability than the average high school student.

However, despite being able to construct well-reasoned and supported arguments, the students struggled to work cooperatively in producing an agreed-upon decision. Many students maintained their original position they held prior to the initiation of the deliberation and failed to yield or compromise when presented with new solutions or explanations. In addition, students lacked the means or the ability to unify themselves into making a decision. The deliberations were often disorganized in their topical flow, which required individual students as well as teacher intervention to provide both an agenda and order. Thus, based on these obstacles, more teacher-control may be needed as opposed to the openness of class discussions that is often advocated (Newmann, et al., 2007). Or, perhaps, new structures for deliberation discussion,

beyond the traditional one-class discussion period or the single-subject-dominated forum, is needed to foster consideration of different topic components as well as provide a pathway to collective decision-making.

Choice of format. As part of the primary research question of this study, the analysis and comparison of the three formats proved both insightful to me as a researcher as well as informative of my own teaching practices. Neither of the formats definitively stood out as a clear leader as a means of producing conducive and successful deliberation. Rather, they supported different students and different styles of thinking, thus complementing one another in that they are individually appropriate for certain students as well as specific instances. Therefore, due to the different reasons in which one better served a need in comparison to the other, educators should note that an informed decision must be made specific to each curriculum usage of the formats rather than adopting a blanket application of one format for all classroom deliberations. For instance, while the use of deliberation as a culminating experience is better-suited as a face-to-face experience due to the time dynamics, one must also consider how students who are not prone to speaking in class will participate in this summative assessment experience. Given the aforementioned example, it makes apparent the difficulty in holistically judging these formats separated from both the curriculum usage as well as the class dynamics. In addition, it demonstrates that each of the formats deserves a worthy place in the collection of tools that teachers have in implementing problem-based learning within their classroom.

Classroom dynamics. Students demonstrated they are capable of critical thinking and reasoning, thus dismissing some critics who argue they are unable to do so. Yet, it was not clear from this study if students collectively are capable of accepting alternative ideas from peers for acceptance. For each deliberation, a small, limited number of students evolved from their pre-

deliberation stance, as indicated in their “ticket,” to a new position following the conclusion of the deliberation in their policy paper. Students revealed their capacity for exploring and discussing controversial political issues but, at times, revealed a propensity for partisanship and monopolization at the expense of those disagreeing with them. Such behavior brings into question the future ability for these students, and others, to collaborate effectively in order to solve a posed problem without building personal boundaries against opposing ideas. If the aforementioned behavior is allowed to persist, it detracts from the goals of deliberation that are designed to help foster a growing democracy and promotion of an active citizenry (Dahl, 1998; Guttman, 1987).

Teachers should work to identify and eliminate negative influences on class deliberations through the promotion of an accepting, positive classroom climate and open invitation for participation by all. In addition, teachers need to promote the goals of political deliberation, such as developing an understanding of the “common good,” through the discussion of its ideals and goals, rather than relying on popularized media representations of angry, bitter political dialogue that frequents news reports. Through thoughtful teacher preparation of students for the deliberation process and proactive involvement in the discussion itself, procedural behaviors as well as student attitudes regarding the process can be shaped to help foster a more accepting environment. Such an environment can lend itself to the productive development of an insightful discussion, purposefully driven by students to find a solution that meets the best needs of those impacted by the issue under investigation.

Suggestions for Further Study

This study contained several variables, which, in and of themselves, contain great potential for further study and investigation. One of the variables in this study is the role in which topic choice impacts student engagement and student critical thinking. While several insights were produced from this class' participation, more information is needed about how topic selection in a problem-based curriculum environment shapes engagement and the collective decision-making process. This is not a question of controversial versus noncontroversial issues, but should be more focused on what type of controversial issues students discuss and the degree of complexity and "out-of-the-box" thinking they permit. In addition, research is also needed about how topic selection arises, including whether such decisions are teacher-dominated, curriculum-driven, or guided by student-choice. These considerations may influence the engagement and degree to which students engage in the topic. For instance, the lack of personal connection to the Electoral College and presidency deliberations may have led to the limited presence of personal connections or efforts to bring in outside knowledge as a result of student disengagement with the topic. If more information were to be produced about the impact of topic selection and framing in the secondary social studies classroom, content selection, student engagement, and civic education may all be served for the better.

One of the more difficult dilemmas that I am presented with as a result of this study is the question of how do I ask students to make a final decision in a deliberation. In this study, I failed to foresee the ability of the deliberation to move towards students voicing or constructing a solution while together; yet, each student did produce their own decision following the conclusion of the deliberation. The lack of a tool or procedure during the discussion itself designed to call for a decision posed an obstacle to both the students and I, who collectively were expecting for a decision to be produced. While much has been written about deliberations as a

type of discussion, more research and experimentation is needed to produce insight into the design of these discussions. Differing from deliberations, Socratic seminars may be better fit to have a loose flow to them and, adhering to competition framework, debates often have a very rigid structure and rules that govern their flow. The question presents itself of whether deliberations need a specific organization or structure to them that moves beyond or enhances the framework developed by Parker (Parker and Zumeta, 1999). For instance, should the teacher take each of the steps outlined by Parker and ask the class to move through them independently in a chronological fashion with each part limited by time? While such a thorough procedure may ensure that all elements of the policy question and solution are addressed, it does limit the control of the discussion that students might have possessed with a looser structure as it requires greater teacher control and direction. Such trade-offs should be explored in order to aid the teacher who wishes to utilize deliberations in their classrooms for the purpose of allowing students to produce a collective decision as opposed to merely exploring and debating a controversial issue.

Yet, teachers should also explore how deliberation can be infused into other practices. While deliberation as a discussion method in this study stood alone, it can also potentially be incorporated into other forms of classroom culminating activities, especially those replicating authentic practices by both citizens and government leaders in America. For instance, role-playing and simulations offer students the ability to deliberate on both current and historical issues; for instance, students could adopt the perspectives of Lincoln's cabinet and advisors while deliberating on the possible solutions to the Fort Sumter crisis. In a high school civics class, students could incorporate deliberation into a simulated Town Hall meeting in which students work to create a solution to a local town issue. Such activities could be enhanced by the

teacher helping students understand what the deliberation process is and the essential components (or criteria to be addressed) in a deliberation. Guidance about the deliberation process, and its place in America's system of government, could enhance the learning outcomes and insights generated from engaging classroom exercises, such as the culminating activities mentioned above.

Along with the possibility of infusing deliberation into more complex culminating activities, the various components of the deliberation process, such as considering stakeholders or assessing the benefits and drawbacks of offered solutions, should be further explored as means of formative assessment in problem-based learning. While in this study, information was presented during curriculum units that allowed students to consider such criteria, the lessons building towards the deliberations did not allow for adequate discussion of these criteria amongst the students. Further investigation of deliberation could examine the division of the deliberation process across the unit of study. For instance, students may discuss collectively following a lesson that basic components of the problem once the teacher has introduced the controversial political issue; this is as opposed to summarizing it at the end of the unit. Such a discussion might occur at the conclusion of a class. If a teacher were to divide the deliberation process across the unit, it is reasonable to believe that opportunities for both face-to-face and online discussion would present themselves. Online discussion, as opposed to strict deliberation, may provide an outlet for students to engage in a dialogue designed for clarification throughout the unit; such discussion could even be subdivided into small group forums allowing students more opportunities to respond to one another. Division of the process across the unit could be beneficial to classes that struggle to grasp concisely a complex issue at one single point in time.

Within two of the formats themselves, more information is needed on the impact of slight variations to their structure. While some information exists on what the perceived differences are in threaded versus unthreaded online discussions, I could not locate a study in which these differences were explored in real classroom environments. The differences in these two approaches to an online discussion need to be understood in further detail. Possible differences may account for a variation in student engagement and the ability to explore subtopics at greater depth versus the ability to engage the whole class in resolving the primary issue. Another variation that should be explored further is the order in which one conducts a blended deliberation. A question that needs to be asked is: to what extent does the order in which one organizes a blended class discussion impact the results of that discussion? In my own observations from this study, I would be led to believe that using online first then followed by a conclusion face-to-face component may be best. This provides the opportunity for the class to present a variety of ideas for consideration online, then permitting the time in class to resolve these dilemmas or questions presented. Yet, this observation is limited to simply one class' experience in a specific curriculum scenario. Thus, the order in which one utilizes a blended deliberation may depend on the need to which it is serving for the teacher. For instance, in a problem-based unit, a class may open with a question being presented in the classroom for face-to-face discussion but the question remains to be explored through online discussion for the remainder of the unit. Answers to these questions would further the knowledge a teacher possesses about under what circumstances to utilize certain variations of the online and blended deliberations.

A final area that should be explored further is the introduction of online discussion inside the classroom as either a supplement to face-to-face discussion, which is occurring

simultaneously, or as an activity by itself. With current technology, such as Twitter, Google Moderator, and Today's Meet, the ability for students to quickly communicate back and forth via technology in the classroom is now a reality that they are accustomed to and have familiarity with, often via their own personal phones. If used as a supplement, this technology would assist in creating a "backchannel" that permits students to be discussing amongst their selves as a class wide activity or face-to-face discussion occurs. (Gabriel, 2011) Yet, it is also possible to be used as the sole method of discussion amongst students. This might serve as a means of developing discussion skills or building a comfort level with discussion amongst a class of predominantly shy students. With the constant introduction of new social media technology, new possibilities for infusing non face-to-face discussion while in the classroom seem endless.

Conclusion

This study originated as a means of comparing and contrasting the impact of format on a class' collective experience deliberating controversial political issues. As part of this investigation, attention was also given to subsidiary issues in the process including student capability of critical thinking, the collective decision-making process of students, the role of the teacher, and the influence of topic choice. Student participation varied across the formats as more students engaged online, yet they did so minimally in comparison to the many contributions offered by a minimal number of students in face-to-face deliberation. While students' contributions often focused on either supporting their own opinions or refuting those of others, interaction amongst students in respect to engaging with each other's commentary was more apparent in the face-to-face discussions as opposed to online. In addition, a greater respect for others' comments and beliefs tended to prevail in the face-to-face sessions, yet students did report they felt more honest and likely to disagree online. Most students expressed that they

learned through the deliberation process in each of the formats; yet, they tended to enjoy learning via the face-to-face format more as opposed to online deliberation, which they felt was more burdensome and assignment-like as it occurred outside of the classroom. Although many students maintained their original opinion they held prior to the deliberation, some students shifted their preferences revealing the capability of the process to impact the manner in which one views the controversial political issue. Each of the three observed formats witnessed student engagement and exploration of the controversial political issue, yet each format encountered a similar problem: the absence of a well-designed intervention or step that promoted students making a collective decision. Due to this absence and despite modeling of the steps or criteria to consider in deliberations, students failed to develop an agreed-upon solution that reflected the “common good” understanding of the students.

One cannot take away from this study the belief that one of the three formats explored is to be preferred in all cases in comparison to the other two. Rather, one should examine the need for the deliberation and the context in which it fits into their designed curriculum. As experienced in this study, variables exist, such as overtly opinionated students as well as student embracement of the topic, that impact the success and manner in which deliberations should occur. If teachers choose to utilize the deliberation model as a means of exploring controversial political issues, many considerations must occur to determine the ideal variation that best meets their own class’ needs.

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APPENDIX A: Policy Deliberation Ticket

Name: _____

POLICY DELIBERATION TICKET

Directions: Complete the following brainstorm guide prior to participating in the class deliberation (online and face-to-face). The option you choose should be how you currently feel regarding the policy question; you are NOT obliged to defend your option throughout the policy deliberation.

POLICY QUESTION:

OPTIONS: What are the choices the policymaker can take?

Option Considered: What option do I believe is best?
--

CONSEQUENCES: What will happen if I adopt this option?	REASONS: Why do I think each consequence will occur?	VALUE: How important is the consequence? Why?

Ticket derived from Robert Swartz's "Infusing Critical and Creative Thinking into Instruction in High School Classrooms" in *Critical Reasoning and Reasoning: Current Research, Theory and Practice* (Cresskill: Hampton Press, 2003), edited by Daniel Fasko Jr.

POLICY QUESTION: Should the United States extend suffrage to disenfranchised groups?

OPTIONS: What are the choices the policymaker can take?	
<p>No Yes to everyone convicted felons</p>	<p>All ages non-citizens mentally disabled</p>

Option Considered: What option do I believe is best?

Disenfranchised felons only

CONSEQUENCES: What will happen if I adopt this option?	REASONS: Why do I think each consequence will occur?	VALUE: How important is the consequence? Why?
1. Convicted felons will receive right to vote if they had it taken away previously	1. some states take away one's right to vote if convicted of certain crimes	1. <i>VERY IMPORTANT:</i> it helps ensure that convicted felons are not punished twice (double jeopardy) for their crimes
2. They will have opportunity to reregister if they lose registration status due to prolonged stay in jail	2. Certain states (Such as Arizona and Washington) take away one's vote after a period of inactivity	2. <i>SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT:</i> this happens to numerous people and in some states all convicted felons need to do is reregister
3. Large increase in possible voting amongst African-American and Hispanic men	3. Racially, felons are disproportionately Hispanic and African-American; 1 in 5 African American males are convicted felons	3. <i>IMPORTANT:</i> These demographic groups are underrepresented and need more voters in order to have greater influence in government
4. Could increase political efficacy of convicted felons	4. Felons are more likely to distrust the government as well as feel that their views/opinions do not matter	4. <i>SMALL IMPORTANCE:</i> Felons likely also have lower education and their history of crime shows a greater decrease in civic involvement that voting most likely can't overcome
5. More voters could change outcome of close elections in slightly leaning Republican states	5. Felons are 9 out of 10 times most likely to vote Democrat (could have swayed outcome of 2000 election in Florida)	5. <i>VERY IMPORTANT:</i> outcomes of elections create different policies that shape the country

Ticket derived from Robert Swartz's "Infusing Critical and Creative Thinking into Instruction in High School Classrooms" in *Critical Reasoning and Reasoning: Current Research, Theory and Practice* (Cresskill: Hampton Press, 2003), edited by Daniel Fasko Jr.

APPENDIX B: Post-Deliberation Writing Assignment

CONTROVERSIAL POLITICAL ISSUE DELIBERATION FOLLOW-UP WRITING REFLECTION

POLICY QUESTION:

DIRECTIONS: Since we have now explored the policy question above, your task is to write an explanation of how you NOW currently stand on the question. In this written assignment, you are to address the following:

Paragraph 1: What is the problem? Describe or define what the perceived issue is. You can address values, statistics, or other information you believe helps structure the issue into an understandable problem.

Paragraph 2: What is the best solution? In this paragraph, describe what you believe is the best solution. At this point, you need to be detailed about what the solution is, not necessarily the benefit of your proposed plan. [May not be as long as other paragraphs]

Paragraph 3: What are the strengths of your solution? In this section, you can discuss what this problem may solve, how stakeholders benefit, values that are supported

Paragraph 4: Why do you prefer this solution over others? In this paragraph, address the weaknesses or criticisms of the other options. This is your opportunity to refute the opposition.

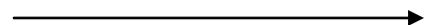
Paragraph 5: Explain whether or not you believe your proposed solution would be acceptable. In this paragraph, you can address such things as political support, constitutionality, or the relative ease/difficulty of implementation.

NOTE: A paragraph is generally thought to be AT LEAST 5 sentences.

How You Will Be Assessed:

	5 points	4 points	3 points	2 points	1-0 points	SCORE
Political Accuracy	Facts included are appropriate in relation to argument; accurate evidence; fully grasps political context; picks strongest evidence in relation to argument	Facts included are appropriate in relation to argument; accurate evidence; understands political context; leaves out strongest or best evidence for positions provided	1-2 political inaccuracies embedded in essay; understanding of political context lacks depth or insight but accurate	3-4 inaccuracies; understanding of political context superficial	Major political errors evident; evidence/arguments lack political context; understanding of issue cannot be identified	____ X 3
Argument Construction	Position is clear; all large reasons support position; logical thesis adopted	2 or more reasons support position; logical thesis adopted; reasoning may not directly match with solution	Position is clear; not all reasons adequately support position; fails to clearly connect reasoning with solution	No clear position; reader must make guess at position by exploring supporting evidence; position lacks appropriate support	Position cannot be identified or is contradictory to evidence/arguments presented in essay	____ X 2
Spelling and Grammar	Well edited; proofreading is obvious; no major or distracting grammar or spelling errors	2-3 major grammatical or spelling errors	4-5 major grammatical or spelling errors	6 or more major grammatical or spelling errors	Too many errors; reading becomes difficult due to distractions	____ X 1

See a sample response on the back



POLICY QUESTION: Should the United States expand the guarantee of suffrage to disenfranchised groups?

Throughout the history of the United States, the national government has slowly expanded the right to vote to various groups. Initially, only land-owning white, protestant males had suffrage rights, yet this expanded during different eras in American history to include various economic classes and religions as well as to include all races and women. This expansion was essential to developing a more inclusive and democratic United States. Yet, several groups are still disenfranchised today, thus leaving segments of the population without a voice in determining who will make public policy. While several large groups lack the right to vote, one group deserves to be enfranchised more so than the other groups: convicted felons.

Convicted felons should receive the right to vote once they have been released, paroled, or placed on probation following a prison sentence. The government does not need to host or allow voting opportunities within prisons as this is too costly; therefore, the policy should be aimed at enfranchising ex-felons. To achieve this goal, a partnership must be developed between prison systems and Secretary of State's office for each state. Once a prisoner has left prison, the Secretary of State's election division should be notified. This can lead to three options: (1) confirming the ex-felon is registered to vote; (2) placing the ex-felon back on the registration list if removed due to inactive status; and (3) mailing a voter registration if they are not registered to vote. For ex-felons who are currently impacted by the law, the prison system and Secretary of State's office should work closely together to ensure that voting applications are sent to those still alive and that they are informed of their new rights.

Convicted felons should not lose the right to vote after they have served their prison sentence. The 5th Amendment to the US Constitution guarantees that one should not held to account for their crimes twice, double jeopardy. A felon serves his or her debt to society through their prison term, while taking away one's right to vote is an additional punishment. This symbolizes to the felon that despite serving time in jail, society views the felon as still a separate person excluded from societal activities. Such exclusion goes against a sense of forgiveness and rehabilitation that is associated with one's release from prison. Another reason to support the enfranchisement of felons is that nature of felon disenfranchisement laws. Most of these laws are toughest and most restrictive in southern states, such as Florida and Mississippi, where the laws were passed either shortly after the Civil War or during the Civil Rights Movement.

Other groups, such as those under the age of 18 and individuals with certain mental disabilities, still lack the right to vote, but the intent of these laws are sound. The denial of suffrage to these groups is largely a result of the policy goal to ensure that voters are mentally capable and have been exposed to enough information to make an informed choice regarding their vote. For those under the age of 18, many of them have not had a basic introductory course in American government, thus they do not necessarily understand the issues or the nature of the positions that they are electing individuals for. Similar reasoning supports the disenfranchisement of non-citizens; in addition, as they may not plan to live in the US for an extended period, there is little personal investment in voting for them as the results of an election may not have direct implications on their lives.

To pass such a change in policy would require a constitutional amendment in order to override various state laws. The conservative political climate in most Southern states would make it difficult to hope that state legislatures would pass suffrage expansion laws on their own initiative. Eleven states currently have disenfranchisement laws, or roughly 20 percent of the states. Therefore, the likelihood of this passing as an amendment is good as an amendment requires approval by 75 percent of the state legislatures. Thus, the proposed policy not only meets the societal problem but also has the ability to be implemented.

APPENDIX C: Teacher Question Script for President Deliberation

- What defines the modern presidency?
 - How do modern presidents differ from those before FDR?
- What should be used as criteria to rate the presidency?
- Are there certain roles we should emphasize over others? (for example, do we head of state more important than guardian of the economy?)
- Does the time define the president? I.e. FDR succeeded, but LBJ is defined by Vietnam
 - What presidents may have performed in an exemplary fashion if given the right circumstances?
- Should the future results of presidential decisions be held against them? (Social security-FDR, Vietnam escalation-JFK, housing bubble-Clinton)
- Is it fair to judge a president on the performance of the economy?
 - To what extent does a president have control over economic performance?
- Commander-in-chief: based on the presentations, what president would you judge as the most successful Commander-in-Chief?
 - Which President used force in the most justifiable means? Least justifiable means?
 - Should we hold a president accountable for an unjustifiable means, but a very successful use of force?
 - Restructuring of the military?-desegregation, Don't Ask Don't Tell, arms deals/limitations
 - Can we declare a president a successful commander-in-chief if they never have to use force?
- Which president had the most organizational-leadership capacity? What defines good leadership in the White House? (wheel-n-spokes versus business model)
 - Ran the best White House?
 - What tools are essential for the maintenance of an effective White House?
 - Why is organizational capacity critical to the success of a modern president?
- Which president proved to be most transformational for America?
 - Did any president create a vision for America that helped set it on a new path? (i.e. Bush-national security; Carter-energy focus; Reagan-economics; Truman-international leadership)
 - Who had the best ability to inspire American's to achieve their vision set out for the country?
 - Did any president stand up for an issue that America was largely against or that was politically unpopular? (LBJ and the poor/African-Americans; Nixon for working with China)
- Which president set forth and achieved the best legislative agenda?

- What methods are justified or legitimate in seeking to have Congress adopt one's agenda?
- Should we hold legislative achievements or the lack thereof against the president?
- Is divided government relevant to the assessment of presidents?
- Does it matter the number of laws passed or the quality of these laws as well as if they hold up in Court (FDR)?
- Would a good president intervene in the legislative process-veto, lobby, "going public?"
- Which leader left his party in the best standing?
 - Does a "good" president ignore his party when necessary?
 - To what extent does a leader maintain a set ideology for the benefit of others?
 - Should we judge a president for the success of others?
- Which leader transformed his party the most? (coalitions, realignment, philosophy)
 - Carter and human rights, Reagan and push towards conservatism, FDR coalition
- Which president connected best with the American public?
 - What was that president's speaking style?
 - Were there any significant events that kept their approval ratings high? Dropped their approval ratings?
- How do we weigh achievements versus scandals?
 - Does the president set a moral standard or example for the nation?
 - Example of Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky-should we hold personal life against an individual (should we hold this against FDR?)
 - Richard Nixon and Watergate
 - Which president best upheld the legitimacy of office?

APPENDIX D: Deliberation Assessment Framework for Students

Class Discussions: A Guide to Your Assessment

Throughout this course, we will have various forms of discussions both in and outside of the classroom. This packet will introduce you to how our classroom deliberations will be assessed, a major component of this class.

Why Discussion?

The importance of a genuine dialogue is that it permits a more accurate diagnosis of the problems at hand.
–Azizah Y. Al-Hibri

Because ongoing disagreement among reasonable people of good will is inevitable in any free society, mutual respect is an important virtue. Deliberation manifests mutual respect since it demonstrates a good faith effort to find mutually acceptable terms of social cooperation, not merely terms that are acceptable only to the most powerful, or for that matter to the most articulate. –Amy Guttmann

A public space is created when people come together in speech and action and try to bring into existence an “in-between” among themselves. –Maxine Greene

Calendar of Discussions

<u>Question</u>	<u>Posted Date</u>	<u>First Post Due By</u>	<u>Discussion Ends</u>
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NOTE: These questions are subject to change based on current events and class interest.

Hints for Successfully Posting Online:

- DO NOT wait until the last minute-who knows if the site might be under repair!
- Read through the conversation first and see where it is at before posting
- Check on the conversation daily to see if you might find a spot where you fit in
- Copy your response before posting in case your computer or the site messes up (a simple highlight and Ctrl + c)
- Conduct some outside research-use the web to help further your argument
- Post more than once as you and your peers are trying to reach a collective decision

Directions for Access:

Discussion Rubric

Substantive Performance Criteria	Procedural Performance Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stating and identifying ethical, definitional, and factual issues • Using disciplinary knowledge • Elaborating statements with explanations, reasons, or evidence • Stipulating claims or definitions • Recognizing values or value conflicts • Arguing by analogy 	<p>Positive (Good behavior):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledging the statements of others • Respectively challenging the accuracy, logic, relevance, or clarity of statements • Summarizing points of agreement and disagreement <p>Negative (Bad behavior):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irrelevant or distracting statements • Obstructive interruption • Monopolizing • Personal attack
<p>The MAJOR goal in grading is the extents to which the student’s contributions to the discussion clarifies the policy issue being considered and helps the group make progress towards a resolution. Three elements are considered when assessing a student’s participation: 1) presented accurate knowledge related to the policy issue; 2) employed skills for stating and pursuing related issues; and 3) engaged others in constructive dialogue. Contributions will receive one of these five scores:</p> <p>UNSATISFACTORY (1): The student has failed to express any relevant foundational knowledge and has neither stated nor elaborated on any issues.</p> <p>MINIMAL (2): The student has stated a relevant factual, ethical, or definitional issue as a question or has accurately expressed relevant foundational knowledge pertaining to an issue raised.</p> <p>ADEQUATE (3): The student has accurately expressed relevant foundational knowledge pertaining to an issue raised during the discussion and has pursued an issue by making a statement with an explanation, reasons, or evidence.</p> <p>EFFECTIVE (4) : The student has accurately expressed relevant foundational knowledge pertaining to an issue raised during the discussion, pursued an issue with AT LEAST one elaborated statement and, in a civil manner, has built upon a statement made by someone else or thoughtfully challenged its accuracy, clarity, relevance, or logic.</p> <p>EXEMPLARY (5): The student has accurately expressed relevant foundational knowledge pertaining to an issue raised during the discussion, pursued an issue with an elaborated statement, and has used stipulation, valuing, or analogy to advance the discussion. In addition, the student has engaged others in the discussion by inviting their comments or acknowledging their contributions. Further, the student has built upon a statement made by someone else or thoughtfully challenged its accuracy, clarity, relevance, or logic.</p> <p>Each discussion grade will be multiplied by 4 for a possibly score of <u>20 points</u> per discussion, or the equivalent of a quiz grade.</p>	

EXAMPLES FOR GUIDANCE: Consider these examples as models for your discussion. The sample question for these examples is: should gays be allowed to openly serve in the armed forces of the United States?

Ethical issue discussion

Aretha: People really seem to disagree strongly about whether gays should serve in the military.

Bob: There have always been gay soldiers and sailors, but most of them have been quiet about it.

Cleo: The question is not whether homosexuals have secretly served in the past. That's not at issue. Everyone agrees they have. The question is whether it is fair to exclude someone from military service based on sexual orientation. Do gays have a right to serve their country?

Definitional issue discussion

Aretha: Homosexuals undermine the morale of the fighting force. Their deviant behavior could be upsetting to the majority of those serving.

Bob: What do you mean by deviant behavior? Does deviant mean conduct merely different from what most people do, or does it have to be harmful to others?

Factual issue discussion:

Aretha: Being near people of the same sex with an amorous attraction to you makes many heterosexuals uncomfortable. If homosexuals want to join the armed services, they should first change their behavior.

Cleo: Can they? I don't know if it's possible. Is sexual orientation learned behavior or is it genetically determined? I think we have to resolve that question before we can determine what kind of behavior to expect of people.

Using disciplinary knowledge:

Aretha: If homosexuals are permitted to serve openly in the armed forces, there will be problems with the uniform Code of Military Justice which is a separate set of laws that applies only to those in the armed forces. Several parts of the code would have to be adjusted if the ban on gays is lifted, like who you can live with, or who you can claim as dependents.

Bob: Not all groups in society are protected under current federal law. Congress intended the civil rights acts to protect people from discrimination based on race, religion, gender, or national origin, but not on sexual orientation.

Cleo: Unless heterosexuals are falsely claiming that they are gay in order to get out of the service with an honorable discharge, the current Pentagon policy of "don't ask, don't tell" seems to be driving homosexuals out of the armed forces. The number of military personnel discharged for homosexual activity or for stating they are gay or lesbian rose 17 percent from 1999 to 2000. That is the highest number since 1993 when the new policy went into effect. Since then the rate of expulsion of gay service members has doubled.

Elaborating a statement with an explanation

Aretha: We have been talking about this issue for a while now. Is anybody ready to take a stand?

Bob: I think the present policy should continue. Openly gay individuals should be banned from the military. I have been thinking about what was said about equal rights and about the good records of homosexuals who have served with distinction. But, for several reasons I don't think the current ban should be lifted. A majority of those currently serving believe the change would lower morale. Many say they would quite the service if gays are allowed to serve openly. Some prominent leaders believe that admitting gays will undermine the primary mission of the armed forces-readiness to fight. And there is also the point about invading the privacy of heterosexuals.

Stipulating an ethical claim:

Aretha: Several times equal rights have been mentioned. We keep asking whether heterosexuals and homosexuals should have the same rights.

Bob: Let's assume, for the time being, that people are entitled to be treated equally regardless of sexual orientation.

Stipulating the definition of a term:

Aretha: Former President Bill Clinton and others have argued that restrictions on serving in the armed forces should be based on conduct. He says it should be what you do not who you are.

Bob: What is conduct? Would telling someone you are gay be conduct? Would reading a gay magazine?

Cleo: This is difficult. I have trouble distinguishing between thought, expression, and conduct.

Aretha: Let's say that conduct means expressed behavior. It can be spoken or written or other kinds of action, but it can't be merely unexpressed thoughts or feelings. Also, let's agree for our discussion that conduct refers to behavior while on military duty or while off-duty but in uniform

Stipulating a factual statement:

Aretha: Some people are worried that the military will be overwhelmed by homosexuals, that they will take over and change the culture of the armed services.

Bob: That fear exaggerates the number of homosexuals in society.

Cleo: How many are there? I keep hearing that 10% of the population is homosexual.

Bob: That figure is based on the Kinsey studies of nearly half a century ago. More recent studies indicate a much lower percentage. *Time* magazine reports that a better estimate is well under 5%. For purposes of our discussion, let's assume that between 2% and 4% of the population is homosexual.

Recognition of a democratic value:

Aretha: Our main purpose for having military forces is to defend the country from enemies. The issue of the ban on gays should be decided on its effect on this mission. What effect does the ban have on the readiness of the troops to fight?

Bob: You seem to be saying that the deciding factor should be national security.

Recognition of a value conflict:

Aretha: This issue requires us to choose between values.

Bob: Which values?

Cleo: On the one hand we value equality which means all citizens should have an equal opportunity to serve their country. We also believe in the right to privacy as a basic liberty which means people have a right to control both information they receive and the distribution of information about themselves. These two values seem to clash over the issue of homosexuals in the military. We have to decide which of these values should have priority in this case.

Arguing by analogy:

Aretha: Maybe gays should be banned from the military for their own protection. If they serve openly, they might become victims of violent attacks from those who are prejudiced against them.

Bob: That sounds like a heckler's veto to me. It gives violent bigots control over public policy. Those who threaten to harm the innocent should be excluded, not their victims

Cleo: That reminds me of President Truman's policy of racial integration of the armed forces. There were many prejudiced whites who did not want blacks to serve with them. Some threatened to do them harm. If it's right to ban gays because some dislike their sexual orientation, then it would have been right to segregate blacks because some despised their race.

Acknowledging the statements of others:

Aretha: If I were a homosexual, I wouldn't want to be a part of an organization where I wasn't welcome.

Bob: That is your personal attitude, Aretha, but how do you think your feelings about rejection pertain to the policy decision to be made here?

Challenging the accuracy, logic, relevance, or clarity of statements:

Aretha: Some people support the ban out of fear of AIDS. Frankly, I am sympathetic. The rate of AIDS among homosexuals is higher than among heterosexuals.

Bob: You have a good point. If gays are excluded, AIDS is less likely to spread in the armed forces.

Cleo: Yes, but it's possible to protect men and women in the service from AIDS without banning homosexuals. Blood testing would do it. We could excluded those who test HIV positive, whatever their sexual orientation. It doesn't follow that the ban on gays is necessary to prevent the spread of AIDS in the armed forces. Do you agree with my logic?

Summarizing points of agreement and disagreement

Aretha: This can get very confusing. I'm not sure what I believe any more. There are so many issues and there is so much disagreement.

Bob: For quite a while now we have been grappling with an ethical issue: Is it fair to treat homosexuals differently than heterosexuals? We agreed that it is an issue involving the value of equality. We also agreed that the value of privacy seems to conflict with the value of equality, and that we might have to choose between them to resolve this issue. We also agreed that everyone has an equal right to serve the country. The consensus broke down, however, when Aretha said that national security should take precedence over equal rights, because without it there will be no protection of anyone's rights. We have not yet resolved whether or not gays serving in the military pose a threat to national security.

Sample discussion derived from David Harris' "Assessing Deliberation of Public Issues: A Scoring Guide" in *Handbook on Teaching Social Issues* (Washington: National Council for the Social Studies, 1998), edited by R. Evans and D.W. Saxe.

APPENDIX E: Survey tool

Deliberation Survey

Answer questions 1-6 by circling one of the numbers on the 5 point scale.

1. How uncomfortable did you feel during online deliberations?
Very = 1 Moderately=2 Somewhat=3 A Little=4 Not at all=5
2. How uncomfortable did you feel in class face-to-face deliberations?
Very = 1 Moderately=2 Somewhat=3 A Little=4 Not at all=5
3. How honest were you in online deliberations?
Very = 1 Moderately=2 Somewhat=3 A Little=4 Not at all=5
4. How honest were you in face-to-face deliberations?
Very = 1 Moderately=2 Somewhat=3 A Little=4 Not at all=5
5. How willing were you to disagree with others in online deliberations?
Very = 1 Moderately=2 Somewhat=3 A Little=4 Not at all=5
6. How willing were you to disagree with others in face-to-face deliberations?
Very = 1 Moderately=2 Somewhat=3 A Little=4 Not at all=5

For questions 7 through 15, circle either online deliberation or face-to-face deliberation.

7. Was the face-to-face or the online deliberation more comfortable?
Face-to-face Online
8. Was the face-to-face or the online deliberation more honest?
Face-to-face Online
9. Were you more worried about hurting others' feelings in the face-to-face or online deliberations?
Face-to-face Online
10. Did you feel as if you had the same feelings as other in the face-to-face or online deliberations?
Face-to-face Online
11. Were you more willing to disagree with others in the face-to-face or online deliberation?
Face-to-face Online
12. Would you prefer to have deliberations online or face-to-face?
Face-to-face Online
13. What format do you believe you learned the most from?
Face-to-face Online
14. What format do you believe you learned the most from others during?
Face-to-face Online
15. What format do you believe felt easier to participate in?
Face-to-face Online

16. What format do you believe had a greater likelihood of influencing or changing your opinion?
Face-to-face Online

For questions 16-20, circle either controversial or noncontroversial.

17. What type of topic did you enjoy discussing more?
Controversial Noncontroversial
18. What type of topic do you believe was better suited for discussing online?
Controversial Noncontroversial
19. What type of topic do you believe was better suited for discussing face-to-face?
Controversial Noncontroversial
20. What type of topic did you learn more from discussing?
Controversial Noncontroversial

APPENDIX F: Interview Protocol

1. Describe for me the class deliberation you just completed with your class.
2. Tell me about your thinking during this discussion.
 - a. Describe for me your initial beliefs regarding the policy question prior to the beginning of the deliberation.
 - b. Was there ever a time in which you felt your opinion was changing?
 - i. What led to this challenge or change?
 - c. What was your final position on the question following the deliberation?
3. Tell me about how you enjoyed this deliberation.
 - a. What did you think about the topic?
 - b. Did you feel engaged or a part of the deliberation?
 - i. How about the class, describe the class' engagement with the topic or the question?
 - c. What about the topic do you believe made it interesting or not interesting for the class?
4. Describe for me what you were feeling during the deliberation.
 - a. Were you able to freely express your opinions? (“Why?” or “Why not?”)
 - b. Describe for me any potential disagreements that occurred in which one might have felt uncomfortable or awkward.
5. Describe for me what you thought about the deliberation structure, such as the rules or the setup.
 - a. Were there any aspects of the setup that either helped or hurt the deliberation?
 - b. What about the set-up made it either enjoyable or easier to deliberate?
6. Explain the decision or understanding about the question that you believe the class was able to create by the end of the deliberation.
 - a. Do you believe that everyone agreed with this position?
 - b. Were there any key moments or statements that helped lead the class to this position?
 - c. Can you identify and describe some obstacles that might have prevented the class from reaching a decision or that slowed the process?
 - d. What aspect(s) of the topic do you believe either helped or hurt the class come to a decision?

APPENDIX G: Coding Guide

Coding Guide

The purpose of this information is to provide and explain the method for coding the transcripts from online and face-to-face deliberations analyzed for this study.

Unitizing

The principle unit of analysis in this study is the verbal or written contribution of a student. The contribution is limited to a single statement by the student, rather than the collective input of the student throughout the deliberation. Each statement may serve as a single source or be further divided into multiple contributions in the form of one word, a phrase, sentence, or more. Each separate contribution is then coded according to the provided coding system below.

When determining if a contribution represents one or several forms of critical reasoning, the ultimate criterion is the determination of the intent of the speaker. While not fully understandable or identifiable, the intent of the speaker can be easier to discern by examining the full contribution of the student, analyzing the surrounding statements by other students

Each separate contribution is then coded according to the coding system below. A contribution may be coded multiple times reflecting a variety of critical reasoning forms evident.

Critical Reasoning Codes

Code (R-) Irrelevancy: This code indicates that a contribution by a student was either a diversion or trivial, thus diverting the deliberation from its path or failing to enhance the discussion.

*The history of South America in the twentieth century is the history of the US carrying out and supporting atrocities in furtherance of its political and economic agenda. I suggest all you pro-US people watch *The War on Democracy* by John Pilger.*

Code (NP+) New Problem-Related Information: This code identified material that enhanced or furthered the framing of the question by providing new constraints or criteria for judging by.

I think a great presidential leader is one who has his own set of political beliefs but does not stubbornly believe that his way is the only way. A president who can work with both parties and find a solution that appeases all in a quick and efficient manner.

Code (NP-) Repeated Problem-Related Information: Unlike NP+, this code recognizes a contribution that has repeated previous material framing the question or providing criteria that was provided beforehand without elaborating or connecting this material to new ideas. This code is also used as a means of indicating that the speaker did not cite or recognize the individual who brought for the information originally.

Yes, if the president is seen more about the scandals then he isn't that great of a president, but just because he has sexual affairs doesn't mean he is a bad president.

Code (NI+) New Ideas for Deliberation: Contributions that receive this code have brought forth a problem or dilemma that one sees as needed to be solved in order to further the deliberation. It can be in the format of a question, yet does not have to be.

Anyone...to what degree should the president be open with the public about his actions? Is there ever a time when he should keep things secretive from the people?

Code (NS-) Superficial Acceptance of Solution: If a student merely adopts a previously offered solution without furthering the discussion of that solution, then that acceptance receives this code.

I have nothing to change about my point of the ideal president for me.

Code (NS+) New Solution: This code indicates that the speaker has put forth a previously unmentioned solution to the policy question or dilemma presented in the deliberation.

Some great modern presidents that exemplified (sic) presidential leadership were FDR, Truman, and Johnson.

Code (NQ-) Rejecting Ideas: When a student fails to accept previously provided information without producing reasoning to indicate why this rejection occurred, this code is utilized.

I believe that a "president" as we know it can never be a good leader by my criteria. Being opposed to liberal democracy, my criteria are obviously very different from someone thinking only within the system.

Code (OE+) Outside Information-Personal Experience: If a student connects the deliberation to a personal experience or can personally relate to what is being stated, the contribution receives this code.

When I served as captain of the basketball team, it was really hard to choose between what you knew was right versus what other members of the team wanted. You want to represent them, but you fear the results. I can certainly sympathize with presidents here.

Code (OQ-) Rejecting Outside Information: This code is used when a student, without provided reasoning, rejects information

Where did you get that from? That completely sounds wrong.

Code (OC+) Outside Information Course-Related: When a student brings forth information presented in the class during a lesson, the contribution receives this code.

If their personal life does become public, there is a chance that public opinion could change, but this is not always bad for them (such as Clinton's scandal).

Code (OF-) Failure to Produce Support: If a student is attempting to make a factual statement, yet fails to provide evidence to support the statement or provides inappropriate/incorrect evidence to support their statement, this code is utilized.

Many presidents also attempt to avoid subjects or problems that will not occur in their terms. Clinton, Bush, and Obama did not address the ever increasing costs of healthcare.

Code (OM+) Outside Material: When a student brings in information they independently sought outside of the classroom, their contribution receives this code.

"I do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States." This oath that the President takes is what presidential leadership should be centered around.

Code (O-) Prejudices and Assumptions: This code is used when a student states an opinion, which could be either a prejudice or assumption, without providing evidence to support that judgment.

Very few leaders have existed by my criteria, but Thomas Sankara and Lenin fit to some extent.

Code (OQ+) Welcoming Outside Information: This code is used when a student either solicits outside information to enhance the discussion or provides recognition to another student's effort to introduce outside information.

Great point Steven. I appreciate you looking that up. Does anyone else know what the poll numbers (if any) looked like for FDR's internment of the Japanese?

Code (OA-) Inappropriate Analogy: If an analogy is used that either does not fit the context it is being used for or if it appears as too far-fetched, then this code is utilized.

What if aliens invaded? Consider that. If aliens invaded, yes the president would have to use the military in his own country and people could get hurt.

Code (OA+) Appropriate Analogy: When a student incorporates an analogy that enhances the deliberation, this code is applied.

Think about a president who believes war is wrong morally, wouldn't he still go to war in order to protect his country. I think a president is always willing to sacrifice personal beliefs for the best interests of his country.

Code (QA-) Irrelevant Question: If a question is posed to solicit information about an off-topic matter or as a means of drawing inappropriate attention to the speaker, the question receives this code.

So, who thinks they could do a good job as president?

Code (QP+) Questioning for New Exploration: This code is utilized when a question is posed to explore new topics or a previous topic in new depth; it is also used if a student poses the question to draw in involvement by others

Anyone...to what degree should the president be open with the public about his actions? Is there ever a time when he should keep things secretive from the people?

Code (QC+) Questioning for Clarification: When a student poses a question to solicit more information on a previously mentioned topic as a means for either clarification or affirmation, this code is applied.

Well, by nature, one's overarching goals---one's vision for society---is necessarily long-term in focus, correct?

Code (LO+) Outlining Conversation: If a student makes an effort to summarize the progress of the discussion, then this code is utilized.

Okay, so we have FDR, Johnson, and Reagan as possible winners. How do they compare though?

Code (LI+) Identifying Dilemma: By identifying a dilemma that is either definitional, ethical, or factual in nature, a contribution will receive this code.

For a president, it is really hard to determine what to do in certain cases. Think about moral values or public opinion, like on gay marriage. Should a president follow his own values or listen to people who elected him.

Code (L-) Repetition of Information: The repeating of information that has previously been mentioned in the deliberation without advancing this information through any further inference or by making an interpretation receives this code. This code differs from (NP-) because it is repeating specific information such as an example, fact, or judgment.

Once again, look at Johnson's Vietnam War experience along with Nixon's.

Code (LS+) Stipulation: This code is applied to a contribution that moves the deliberation forward by stipulating the answer to a fact, definition, or dilemma.

Okay, for the sake of argument, let's assume a president's morals and public opinion are one and the same. What if they are both wrong though? Should we still judge the president here?

Code (LT+) Transition: When a student moves a discussion in a new direction to a relevant topic in a smooth manner

I agree that a president should consider his own morals in making decisions about the nation's future, but what about the president's morals and us. A lot of presidents have been victims of their own moral decisions by the media. I think the decisions a president makes in his private life should not be judged by the public.

Code (LA-) Agreement without Development: If the speaker recognizes or asserts agreement with a previous statement yet takes that statement no further, then this code is applied.

I agree with Adam. Of course it's important to consider public opinion if one wants to get elected.

Code (JP+) Justifying with Proof: This code is used to identify contributions that contain proof or examples to verify the main argument of the statement.

The long-term results of a president in his actions to achieve his goals are difficult to fully and truly attribute to his presidency alone. It is unreasonable to say Social Security's cost is a product of FDR's action, when so much change has occurred between then and now.

Code (JP-) Irrelevant Proof: If a student provides irrelevant or obscuring information to justify a statement, then this code is utilized.

Saturday Night Live rarely had Bill Clinton skits, minus for Monica Lewinsky. They loved him like everyone else.

Code (JS+) Justifying Solution or Judgment: Similar to JP+, this code is used in direct relation to a student citing why he or she supports a specified solution.

FDR, handled more crises than any other president, despite his health problems and the lack of the bureaucracy that exists today. Therefore, he deserves more credit than others for doing more with less.

Code (JC-) Noncommittal: When a student seems to accept numerous solutions without evidence of preference, then this code is utilized.

JFK and Clinton are both really good. They worked well with the public, they received favorable public opinion ratings, and they seemed to look after the interests of minorities and other groups.

Code (JC+) Justifying through Consequences: This code illustrates when a student outlines a possible consequence of selecting an action, whether that consequence is good or bad.

To select Regan is to endorse his Latin American policies. We need to consider how other nations feel as well.

Code (W+) Widening Deliberation: When a student helps the class see the deliberation or issue-at-hand in a wider context, such as framing the issue as a persistent dilemma faced by the nation, this code is utilized.

Which president is best is not just about judging who had more accomplishments. We need to look at this and decide if a leader is one who follows the will of the nation or is a leader someone who seeks to lead the nation where it might not see itself going, but where it needs to be.

Code (W-) Narrowing Deliberation: If a student or group of students focuses on a specific statement or idea that is either a side diversion from the primary topic or a relatively unimportant side tangent of the issue, this code is used.

Reagan was a commercial actor primarily, he never really was that recognized by Hollywood for his acting overall. I can only think of a few things he was in. There were a lot more prominent actors than he was.

Code (CC+) Recognizing Contradiction: This code is used to identify an instance in which a student indicates disagreement with another by pointing out a contradiction in that student's arguments.

Earlier you stated that you wanted a president who respected human rights and sought to protect citizens from all countries. If you believe this and feel FDR was a great president, then you are ignoring the internment of the Japanese and fire-bombing of Germany.

Code (CR-) Challenging through Rudeness: If a student expresses his disagreement with another in a rude manner, this code is used. This could also include sarcastic commentary by students.

You have absolutely no evidence to support that. If you really believe Nixon was effective at promoting civil rights, then you might as well say the KKK was a positive social change agent.

Code (CD+) Disagreement: When a student states their disagreement by questioning the relevance, clarity, logic, or accuracy of a statement, this code is used.

JFK did not pass the Civil Rights Act or the Voting Rights Act, that was Johnson. They were JFKs ideas, but you can't give him credit for them though. Johnson used a lot of his legislative skills to help get them passed.

NOTE: This coding guide is designed based on a model provided by Henry (2003).